

Battlestar Libra

Episode 3: Rendezvous at Ragnar

Previously on Battlestar *Libra*:

Lt. Patrick Cardelli launched his Raptor from a ground base on Aerilon expecting to rendezvous with the Battlestar Omega's battle group and launch a counter attack against the invading cylon forces.

Instead Cardelli wound up in a life and death struggle with his ECO, who turned out to be a cylon collaborator named Simon Landers.

Arriving at new President Roslin's rendezvous coordinates he waited patiently in a massive debris field to see if other Colonial ships survived. Fortunately he was rescued by the assembling civilian fleet led by Kalrk and Mercurius.

Meanwhile on the Cassiopeia moon, Mason Cardelli - Patrick's father - and his employees were hiding underground, frantically loading their ships with supplies and equipment while they waited to see if the cylons moved toward them from a nearby captured military base.

Cassiopeia - a small moon orbiting the outer planet in the Colonial star system

The "Cardelli Corporation", Day 1 0545 CUT

Preparing for evacuation at an underground tylium mine

Mason was in the underground office bright and early after managing to catch a couple of hours sleep, pausing just long enough to pour the noxious liquid his personal secretary had dared to call coffee down the room's small sink.

He opened the overhead cabinet and reached past all of the liquor bottles and took out a clean crystal glass. Opening a small refrigerator next to the sink he took out a carton of orange juice and poured himself a glass.

"The coffee around here has always sucked... even when we had Colonies to grow the frakking beans," he decided moodily. He took a sip from the glass and then laughed heartily. "Now the frakking cylons even have me talking to myself."

There was a soft knock at the door and he turned to see his daughter Adrianna enter. She gave him a small smile but he could tell that most of her thoughts were elsewhere, namely with her brother Patrick and her mother Mariah.

"The latest scouting mission just touched down," she reported. "There's no sign of other ships - friendly or otherwise - on our DRADIS and the shuttle's pilots have reported that the cylons still haven't moved off of the military base."

"We have to leave today," Mason said firmly, drinking the last of the orange juice in his glass. "Make sure the workers down there finish the loading ASAP."

He watched her turn toward the door. "Adrianna," he said, causing her to pause mid-step. "It will be all right," Mason reassured her. "We will be all right. Everyone lost family in this... but we can still survive if we're smart and work quickly."

"I know..." she said. "But we have no way of knowing who else survived."

"Anyone who did will be looking out for themselves first - the same as we have to do," he said firmly. A thought occurred to him. "From now on, have the shuttles go out randomly every twenty to forty minutes. The longer we stay here, the longer our enemy has to plan surprises for us."

"I'll tell them," Adrianna acknowledged, leaving her father to plot.

Previously on Battlestar *Libra*:

The *Libra* was escorted by the only remaining ships from BSG 26, the *Perseus* and the *Douglas J. Griffyn*.

The *Griffyn* and *Perseus* sent out recon Raptors, which would meet the Battlegroup at Ragnar on Day 1 at 0600.

The *Griffyn* repaired what she could, salvaged what Vipers were salvageable and headed towards Ragnar. After the jump there, the *Griffyn's* personnel were forced to make a tough decision: destroy the frigate Heron. The cylons had commandeered her, and she was a danger to the entire Battlegroup.

Colonel Brennan Herald (with collaboration from Commander Rodriguez, and upon Rodriguez orders) made the decision to destroy the Heron after she launched three nukes at *Libra*. The nukes were destroyed, and moments later, so was the Heron.

This has left the Colonel, and most of the CIC personnel suspicious of any strange ship.

At 0455, a new ship jumped to Ragnar, a freighter named *Ensiferum*. It had been on the run from the cylon invasion when it came upon a small moon on which they were able to hide.

After a few hours - which seemed more like days - Captain Peni Brindza decided that action had to be taken. Based on intercepted communications, he jumped to Ragnar where *Ensiferum* encountered a rag-tag fleet of survivors and joined them in their flight from the cylons.

Brindza and his ship were escorted to the Anchorage by the *Griffyn*.

Liza Liala, CBI
Aboard Ring Liner *Grandeur*
0531 Hours

Liza Liala walked into the shuttlebay,, trying to smooth her jacket, rumpled from the all-to-brief time that she had slept in it. Ahead of her, *Mercurius* had landed, and its ramp was extended. Someone wearing clothing indicating him as a member of the crew of the *Grandeur* approached her.

"Your ride is ready, Miss."

She and Willborn made their farewells, and she made sure to remind him not to sleep (despite what she knew from personal experience would be temptation to the contrary) while she was gone. As he left, she walked forward, and climbed the ramp of the *Mercurius*, stopping at the top.

"Permission to come aboard, Mister Kalrk?"

"Come on in, Liza Liala!" he shouted from within *Mercurius*.

Liza went up front and sat down in an empty seat. The ramp retreated back inside its holding space in the small ship, and the hatch closed.

Kalrk, with his helmet off and on the "dashboard", turned and offered to shake her hand. "Welcome back on *Mercurius*, 'the selfish thrill seeker said to the CBI agent.'" And he smiled.

So. He had not forgotten that. No point in starting a fight over it again. One of her eyebrows rose slightly... other than that, she gave no reaction at all.

"Thank you, Mister Kalrk."

"One of our ships picked up a wounded raptor pilot." Kalrk began to catch her up to date. "He said his ECO was somehow collaborating with the cylons and had THIS gizmo."

He handed her the white cylon device. "Please don't turn it on." Kalrk said.

She took the device, turning it around in her hands, examining it. "No worries there, Mister Kalrk." She looked up at him. "Glad to see you made it back in one piece."

"Thanks." he said genuinely. "Major Merconi saved my ass, with her sweet little ship, Terpsichore." Changing subjects he asked, "What about the Grandeur's FTL system? Did you find out what happened?"

"Yes... sabotage."

He rubbed his chin absent absentmindedly. "Another collaborator?"

"That would be my bet," she paused for a moment, then decided to take a chance--there wasn't much to lose. "You're the cylon expert, Mister Kalrk. Any idea what type of people might be collaborating with the cylons? Anything that might help in my investigation?"

"The cylon attack..." he was pondering, "took out so many military ships... before any shots were even fired. The cylons seemed to walk right over our military forces. There must have been some people in high places who, for whatever reasons, helped the cylons."

Kalrk paused. "What type of person? I have no idea, but it seems apparent that they were throughout the colonies. That raptor pilot, Cardelli, his ECO was one, and Grandeur's saboteur, and then whoever shut down the Colonial Forces."

"I don't get it. Usually, in such situations....the person has something to gain, in return." Liala wondered, "What could anyone possibly gain from helping the cylons?"

Kalrk added to the list of questions, "Maybe the cylons promised them something? Maybe the cylons didn't let the humans know that their... return... would be so bloody?"

"Can't see any other way. Damn, guess that's what you get for being a double-crosser. You get double-crossed..." she reached up and rubbed her eyes, then tried in vain to smooth out her now-wrinkled jacket.

Kalrk remembered his near death. "Whoever sabotaged Grandeur picked the perfect moment. I was going to FTL to the little asteroid with Grandeur, but she couldn't jump, so I stayed with her. Then four

raiders showed up... almost killed both of our ships."

"Well, I hope the Commander doesn't want that much of a report on it all. Because at the moment, we've hit a bit of a dead end."

"Dead end?" Kalrk didn't like the sound of that. "Didn't the culprit leave some clues? Was there any visual footage? How badly damaged was the ship? Any kind of weapon?"

"Ship wasn't damaged at all. The sabotage was performed from an access panel in a corridor. Managed to take down the FTL without touching any other systems at all. Damn hard job, from what I hear. Visual footage - none. That area wasn't covered by cameras. Whoever did this knew the ship's systems - and the gaps in the surveillance system - very well."

"Frak... And maybe... maybe there were such 'types' on some of the military ships... maybe even at Fleet Headquarters." He wanted her to imagine a vast number of conspirators, so that when she learned of bio-cylons, it would all fit.

"I think there would have to be. They brought it all down, everything, so fast. So thoroughly. Chaos." her hands clenched at her sides, and her lips tightened, her eyes closed briefly. "The Fleet never had a chance."

"We have a chance. We have to keep our eyes open for any... oddities, I guess."

She laughed harshly. "Oddities? Oddities like our entire society getting destroyed in the blink of an eye? Oddities like people collaborating with our worst enemy for seemingly nothing in return? Oddities like that? Everything is an oddity now, Mister Kalrk. The only odd things are the things that still seem normal."

He took a deep breath. He wouldn't be drawn into any heated exchange with her, not this time. "I mean... any odd behavior, like if someone is somewhere he or she should not be.. things like that."

She sighed, and rubbed at her eyes again. "So far it seems everyone was in just the wrong place, unfortunately."

This was ridiculous. She should have been in better shape than this. She had been up for days before and not felt this bad. But... so much had drained out of her, when she had heard Keramidas' latest announcement over the PA on the Grandeur. And dammit, it showed. She couldn't have that, not now...

"You wouldn't happen to have any coffee around, would you, Mister

Kalrk?"

"I have coffee." he said warmly. "I have stronger stuff too. And please, drop that 'Mister'."

Stronger stuff? She had used that before, on long, tough assignments, during crises or even an intense exercise or two. She would never have guessed it was that widely available. But, she supposed, a man like Kalrk would have had the resources to get just about anything he wanted.

"The stronger stuff, if you please."

"If you please... Kalrk," he corrected her. "Sure thing, Liza Liala."

Battlestar *Libra* conference room

Day 1 0600 Hours

Waiting for Commander Rodrigues

Once all of the civilian ships made it down through the storm all of the Captains and other personnel deemed essential immediately began to shuttle over to the *Libra*.

Most people were, for the most part, shocked upon seeing the damage to the *Libra* and the *Perseus*. *Griffyn* continued to hold position at the rear of the fleet so that it could provide cover in the event of a surprise attack.

With so many people having only bits and pieces of information about the cylons and their new war, it was felt by most ship captains that they should all get together and meet while the crew of the *Libra* continued its search of Ragnar Anchorage for supplies and munitions. The hope was to put all of those bits and pieces together and come up with some sort of plan of action to preserve the safety of the newly-formed fleet.

Lt. Cardelli felt rejuvenated and eager to return to duty after sleeping off the doctor's medications and getting a decent breakfast. He figured the best place to look for a new job would be the *Libra*, but he was also extremely anxious to find out more about the device and tactics his ECO had used during the attack. As a result, he politely requested the chance to accompany Captain Mueller to the conference.

When they arrived, most of the ship Captains were already there along with other people who had been deemed essential to the meeting's simple agenda of "what to do next". Upon pointing out that Commander

Rodrigues was absent, one of the Captains was promptly informed that the Commander was still busy coordinating the search of the Ragnar station and would be in attendance shortly.

With most people emotionally weary, noticeably rattled, and grouchy from lack of sleep all of the room's occupants waited for the Commander's arrival. At first they were mostly silent...

Psyche (Princess) D'Argent
Hanger Deck 0545 Hours

Psy was still on the deck keeping an eye on operations, and waiting. Because of her inability to wear a helmet she was yet again left off a mission. She sighed - even worse she had been assigned guard duty, a job that other people had performed for her in her last life. Psy's lips twisted sardonically at the thought as she waited for her charges - Kalrk and Liza Liala - to arrive. She groaned at the thought of playing babysitter. Well at least Hugo was stuck here with her, even if he was spending the whole time teasing her for all the gauze wrapped around her head. She touched the bandage over her wound tentatively; she was more sure then before that the medic had gone over board on it. Oh well, Psy thought, it's not like I have a beauty contest to win. Then Hugo gave her a nudge - apparently the ship with their charges was landing, and so they went to meet them.

Libra Hanger Deck
0553 Hours

Mercurius' ramp was extended down to *Libra's* deck and the hatch opened. The woman exited first; she was from the C.B.I. Then the CEO of K Industries followed her down the ramp. The pair were met by a junior officer and two Marines.

That's the military, Kalrk thought to himself. Always putting on a show.

There was something familiar about the female Marine with her head wrapped in gauze. He could see some of her red hair. And her face had no flaw, as though it were a painting. She looks like D'Argent's daughter, the beauty queen, he continued mentally. But he knew that couldn't be; D'Argent would never have allowed her to join the Colonial Forces.

Liala and Kalrk were escorted to meet Commander Rodrigues.

Psyche (Princess) D'Argent

Libra Hanger Deck
0553 Hours

Psy stood watching as the ramp was extended. The CBI agent, the woman, left the ship first. Psy had been given her name earlier - Liza Liala. Psy looked her over and wondered if this is how Toni had felt all those times, waiting on her. Now there was someone she had not thought of in years - not since she had given Toni the slip at the Miss Twelve Colonies pageant, two years ago. She supposed she must be dead now.

The next person to exit the ship was the man, Kalrk of K industries. She knew little of him as he had just been starting out when she had left that world. She looked up at him to see who it was she was protecting and the world just melted away as her chest contracted painfully.

The others started off without her, not noticing that she had not followed. They went about five steps when Hugo noticed; he turned to see her still standing there, the expression on her face like she had just gotten hit on the head with a frying pan.

"Hey, Princess, get a move on!" he tried to say inconspicuously, to no avail.

Psy didn't respond, still looking stunned. It took a few more attempts before Hugo gave up and just yelled loudly, "Hey, Psyche, is that bump to your head finally having an affect to your brain?"

With that he had finally broken through her daze, making her realize she had been forgetting to breathe. She exhaled, then inhaled as she came to her senses. She decided to let Hugo assume that, to attribute the entire strange incident to her head injury. Quickly she caught up to Hugo and the rest of the party, all of whom now had stopped to stare at her strange behavior.

Previously on Battlestar *Libra*:

Pvt Dan Wolfe hadn't been on the *Libra* long enough to be assigned duties with his squad. He had been assigned to a Damage Control team, and had already seen two of his DC teammates, knuckledraggers, killed in an explosion caused by cylon missiles. He'd also seen a *Libra* crew member die after being crushed by a collapsed beam. It had taken three of them to lift the beam off the crew member, but Dan somehow still felt responsible for her death. If only he'd been able to get the beam off her sooner.

The crisis had some positive results for him, though. He'd met LCpl

Psyche D'Argent, a stunning redhead who had been a beauty queen before she joined the Marines. She seemed interested in Dan, a surprise to him because he'd heard she preferred to keep to herself. He wasn't complaining, though! He'd also met PFC Frankie Laffitte, one of the Recon Marines, as Psy was; and another Recon jarhead, LCpl Josette Benoit. Josette was as beautiful as Psy, at least in Dan's eyes, and it looked like she could be a good friend.

In the chaos of the cylon attacks Dan had no idea to whom he was to report, or what his duties would be. Luckily for him, Josette had taken him under her wing, treating him like another of the elite Recon platoon members.

Destroyer Douglas J. Griffyn
Combat Information Center
Day 01 0600 Hours

The Captain's meeting was about to begin, and the Recon Raptors were due back at 0600. Commander Herald looked down at his watch to see that it was indeed 0600.

"Anytime now Mongoose," he whispered to himself.

One minute passed... two... three... four... five... six... SEVEN...

"Multiple DRADIS contacts, sir, picking up Colonial transponders. It's the Raptors," Braddock said.

"Mongoose, this is Herald, we are holding position near the Anchorage, please navigate down through the storm. Raptors from *Perseus* will land on *Griffyn*. You will land in the port pod and stand by to go to the *Libra* for debrief," he told Mongoose over the wireless.

Herald suddenly remembered the Captain's Meeting, Rodriguez had said to come to the *Libra* as soon as the Recon Raptors returned, but he would be in a meeting with the Civilian Captains.

"Braddock, get me *Libra*," he said as Braddock went to work.

"Line open sir," Braddock replied.

"*Libra*, this is *Griffyn* Actual. Our recon Raptors have just returned and are being recovered now. Commander, do you want us present at the Captain's Meeting? I have a bird waiting bring me over sir. Your orders, sir?" Herald inquired.

Previously on Battlestar *Libra*:

PO2 Alexandra MacLean lived and breathed Viper and Raptor maintenance. The *Libra's* Chief of the Deck, Chief Karl Sutton, had seen Mac's natural ability the first day she'd been assigned there, encouraging her and sharing with her his many years experience. He was, perhaps, not quite old enough to be her father, but that's how Mac had come to think of him.

Then he'd been killed in a causeway collapse while doing damage control, and the old man, Commander Rodrigues, had directed Mac to take over the Chief's duties. Mac knew that Chief Sutton had been preparing her to be a chief of the deck someday, but normally that wouldn't have happened for years.

These were far from normal circumstances, though. Events had been so chaotic, Mac hadn't had time to think about anything much besides trying to get the birds patched up and flying again. A cylon missile had somehow blasted into the flight deck without exploding, and one of the Marines disarming it had also disarmed her... Frankie Laffitte. She'd been assigned to the *Libra* for over two years, and had never noticed him before—perhaps because she usually preferred to spend her off-duty time on the deck. There was something about Frankie Laffitte—but Mac could tell he was a ladies' man, a consummate flirt, and put thoughts of him aside.

There was work to be done, Vipers and Raptors to be repaired, and now... a chance to resupply from Ragnar Station.

We need to rearm, refuel, and repair.

PO2 Alexandra MacLean
Day 01 0545 Hours

Mac sat at Chief Sutton's desk, a file entitled 'Ragnar Station' pulled up on the computer screen in front of her. The desk itself was littered with papers and ship parts and partially assembled components... and a set of dog tags on top of a small box containing Chief Petty Officer insignia.

Mac frowned at the computer screen, scrolling through the file, and finally stopped, nodding slowly. "Knew it was in there," she muttered, and clicked on the print icon. She sat back and yawned, rubbing her eyes as she waited for the printout to complete. I am so frakking tired... but then she pushed the thought firmly aside. She stood and took the printed out sheets and went out onto the deck, spreading the papers on a worktable.

"What's this, Mac?" Specialist Li-Hao Chang asked her.

"These, Li, are maps of the supply areas of the station," Mac said. "Round up the others, will you?"

Mac had sent the night shift knuckledraggers off to get some rest as soon as the day shift people had started showing up; when the day shift crew gathered, she handed out assignments and maps.

"We're looking for anything and everything we could use for our ships," she told them. "These maps probably aren't accurate, but it's a start. Be quick but be SAFE—I heard it looks like there was already some sort of accident in there. People are more important than any supplies we can get." And I sure don't want to lose any more knuckledraggers.

"As soon as the Marines give us the all-clear, we'll go," she told the deck crew.

**LCpl Josette Benoit and Pvt Dan Wolfe
On Ragnar Station
Day 01, 0510 to 0600 Hours**

Previously:

Riley's men were already spinning the wheels to undo the hatch. The large port swung open, and the crew moved quickly through the airlock into Ragnar Station. The main entry doors were rusted as if they had been here for hundreds of years, no doubt from the storm below them. In addition there were impact points, recent ones, from small arms fire. The doors opened up to a large room, which was strewn with cases and cylinders. It appeared there had been recent activity here. There was a lift in the center of the room which showed signs it had also been recently used. Along the far wall one of the hatchways had been fused from an explosion. The smell of molten metal still permeated the air.

The Marines fanned out, checking everywhere they could for any sign either cylons or humans were on this station.

LCpl Jo Benoit walked in front while Pvt Dan Wolfe, carrying the heavy machine gun, covered the rear. They moved stealthily, watching for any indication that anyone, cylon or human, was still around.

Someone had definitely been there not too long ago - and there had been a fight. They found some blood on the deck, not yet totally dry.

But there was no body, and no one to be found.

Dan took in the scene, wondering what had happened. This place is creepy, he thought, alert for any danger, but so far the place seemed deserted. He wanted to say something to Jo over the comms, but didn't want to disrupt her concentration.

They continued the search of the area assigned to them, leapfrogging through hatchways and providing cover for each other.

Previously on Battlestar *Libra*:

Captain Ingalo Rees, newest squadron commander aboard the *Libra*, fought his hardest against the returned cylon menace, but his Viper had been badly damaged during the battle. He managed to bring it home, landing in a barely controlled crash.

Later that night, he suffered several intense nightmares relating to his now presumably deceased fiancée, Lisa.

Battlestar *Libra* Quarters of Ingalo Rees 0530 Hours CUT

The screech was nearly unbelievable; over and over it repeated, loud and piercing.

Ingalo sat up slowly, and reached over and silenced the wake up alarm.

He turned his body stiffly and set his feet on the floor. He felt as if he had barely gone to sleep before the alarm had gone off.

Come on, Slammer. It's just another morning. Let's go...

Rolling off of his bed, he took up his normal position, and began doing push-ups. 100... 99... 98... 97... 96... He focused on his count, shutting all other thoughts away.

***Libra* Hangar Bay 0557 Hours**

Quickly she caught up to Hugo and the rest of the party all of who now had stopped to stare at her strange behavior.

Kalrk sensed his Marine escort pause, and turned to look back as Lopez called out to his partner, "Hey, Psyche, is that bump to your

head finely having an affect to your brain?"

Kalrk focused on the wounded Marine, noting the lines of her face, the flame-red hair that spilled from beneath the gauze wrapped around her head. Psyche, he called her Psyche, he thought. That IS D'Argent's daughter!

Kalrk cleared his throat, and smiled at the female Marine. "Are we being escorted by Psyche D'Argent?" Kalrk asked Liala, pitching his voice so that D'Argent would hear. He watched the female Marine as he spoke. When she didn't immediately respond, he asked her directly, "Miss D'Argent? Is that you?"

Psy caught up to the group and as she arrived HE looked right at her, making her heart race and mouth go dry--just about convincing Psy that for the first time in her life she was getting sick. She tried to shrug off this disconcerting development as she answered the question he had just asked.

"Yes" she squeaked. Clearing her throat, she added, "I, um, guess you must have known my father?"

"The business worlds are small, Miss D'Argent. I have met your father at a few social functions."

Kalrk didn't want to talk about her family, thinking it likely they had perished just yesterday. He quickly changed the subject quickly, but the change flowed smoothly. "I am certain you and I have never met before, Miss D'Argent."

Liala cleared her throat.

"Hmm?" Kalrk responded, his attention diverted from the redhead. Glancing at Liala, he noted her impatience. "Oh, right - the Commander is expecting us. Let's not keep him waiting."

As the small group resumed walking, Kalrk turned his head, so that Psyche could hear him. "Perhaps we'll have an opportunity to speak again, Miss D'Argent." He meant the comment to sound informal, and inviting. His thoughts, though, ran counter to his desires. Kalrk, you idiot. Why would she, or any woman, want to talk with you?

**LCpl Jo Benoit and Pvt Dan Wolfe
Aboard Ragnar Anchorage
Day 01 0625 Hours**

Josette watched the knuckledraggers scurry about like busy ants, searching for parts. She glanced at her partner, Dan Wolfe. He looked

about as bored as she was. "They seem to know what they're looking for, no?"

"Yes," he agreed, smiling slightly at how she phrased things. Gods, that accent... "You said you're from, ah... um, Port something?"

"Oui, Port Rouge. It's a district of Montvert, one of the largest islands in the northern hemisphere of Aquaria. You were born close to the sea too, right?" He really did have a nice smile.

"Yeah, Cape Nereus on Sagittaron. I love the ocean... we could have really bad storms in the winter, but I liked it even then." He paused, thinking of family and home. Resolutely he pushed away the dark thoughts. "I even liked swimming when it was stormy, the waves... it was scary, but also exciting." He shook his head, grinning. "And freezing!"

She laughed softly, the sound a little throaty and a little breathless, like kittens purring. "Moi aussi! My father didn't like it when I swam too far, but I would anyhow. But the cold water! Non! I like my water warm. Dauphines-sur-la-Mer, the town where I grew up, it is close to the equator, very tropical. I don't know how people swim in cold water. Your fingers must turn blue!"

He chuckled, nodding. "Fingers AND toes," he agreed. "I'd like to go to Dauphines-sur-la-Mer and swim sometime," he said without thinking, then realized... Frak, that was a stupid thing to say, what if- "Sorry," he blurted. "I got a bad habit of running my mouth without thinking."

"Why would you apologize? It is a lovely town and I'd..." And then she realized, Dauphines-sur-la-Mer probably was no more. She closed her eyes and swallowed hard. But she continued bravely, "I would have been happy to show it to you, and you would have had a wonderful time there, but it is no longer possible, right? So we must go on. No apologies, mon ami."

Dan breathed in and out deeply and nodded. I'm not gonna think about my family right now, I'm NOT... "So, ah, er, how's Captain Riley, y'know, as our commander?"

Josette welcomed the change in subject. "Captain Riley is very good; you will see, Dan. He is fair and he knows his stuff." She lowered her voice, "and he is lucky! It's an important thing, Dan, to serve under a lucky officer - because the luck rubs off on you!"

"Good," Dan said. He pondered for a moment. "I guess I can use luck." I think we all can use as much luck as we can get. He shifted the gun in his arms, watching the knuckledraggers. His eyes rested on one, a

woman who looked too young to be in charge—but it seemed she was. “Who’s that?” he asked Jo. “The really small one--do you know?”

Josette followed his line of sight. “That one? She’s Alexandra MacLean. She’s second in command after Chief Sutton. She’s a cool one, little Mac! Last night Frankie and I had to disarm a missile that flew in the hangar and didn’t explode. I tried to get her out of harm’s way but she would not budge! But you must have heard about that - Psy was there; that’s how she got hurt.”

“Oh! I heard about the missile, but I didn’t know that’s how Psy got hurt.” He paused and said more slowly, “A lot of people got hurt doing damage control... I guess I thought it was from that.” Like by falling beams and explosions. He stifled a yawn and eased his shoulders. “I feel like I haven’t slept for years.” And I knew I shoulda been a little easier with the weights. I'm gonna be sore.

“A lot of people got hurt, yes...” Her voice was soft and sad. And then she fell silent.

Previously on Battlestar *Libra*:

Hunt had grown up in the streets of Hedge City on Aerilon, living on his wits and eating out of soup kitchens. He’d been on the run from rival gang members and cops both and had hidden in a shuttle in the spaceport. He ended up inadvertently stowing away when the shuttle took its cargo up to the cargo transport ship *Demeter*. Shortly after he hid himself on the cargo ship, the cylons had attacked, but Hunt knew nothing of that. He was feverish from an infected gash, which was tended to by Ferdie Bello, the *Demeter*’s nurse.

Hunt wasn’t concerned about the destruction of the colonies, nor had he considered what his role would be after such a holocaust. All he knew was that there seemed to be an unlimited amount of food on the *Demeter*—food better than any he’d tasted before.

***Perseus* Infirmary**

Time unknown

They had told him that his eye probably could not be saved...

A short time later Cole was brought out of his dark thoughts by a very familiar voice. A black mood had plagued him since the surgical assistant told him it was likely he would lose his damaged eye.

"Ah, Richard, you're awake! Very good, then I can have a quick peek at your eyes right now..."

Doctor Joseph Walters, more often than not just called "Doc", was an old acquaintance of Cole's. He had been the lead surgeon when the Shuttle that was supposed to transport several officers to the Colonial War College Compound on Picon had crash-landed into shallow water because of unforeseen engine problems. Cole had been the sole survivor. During the crash, Cole's head had impacted on a panel and he still bore a nasty scar on his face that ran from his forehead right through his left eyebrow and on his left cheek.

During the physical therapy Cole had to undergo because of his other injuries, he and the Doc had quickly become friends and it had been a very nice surprise to find a friendly face when he came aboard *Perseus*. But judging from the tone of his voice Cole would say the good doctor was nervous, and that was never a good sign.

"Hey Doc. So, Gabby told me it doesn't look so good?"

Clothes rustled and Cole felt the bed underneath him shift when someone, presumably the Doc, sat down on the edge of the bed.

"No, it doesn't, Richard. Now let me take a look at your right eye first, the good one, I will take the bandage off but you will have to keep the eye closed until I tell you it's OK to open it, OK?"

"Yeah, alright."

He felt the bandage on his right eye being taken off, but concentrated on keeping it shut closely until the Doc gave word. During their early days in Physical Therapy he had learned to trust the Doc on things like this.

"OK, it should be alright now, Richard. Open it."

Cole opened his eye. At first he had to blink furiously because even with lowered lights the Infirmary seemed way too bright, but within seconds his eye adjusted and his sight became clear.

"I see you Doc, it seems to be working fine!"

"Very good, very good. Now to the other one." Doc Walters began to remove the bandage that covered Coles left eye...

Battlestar *Libra* **0555 Hours**

After a brief wake up workout, Ingalo Rees was just stepping out of the shower and toweling his hair dry. He glanced over at his wall

mounted day planner. Okay, preflight briefing at 0700, and then CAP with 'Nomen' from 0800 to 1200. *At least, that was the plan yesterday*, he thought. *Got to make sure and check with the CAG after a quick breakfast.*

Then he realized the question didn't have to wait for a face-to-face with the Commander of the Embarked Air Group. Ingalo turned on his computer link, and tapped a quick message out:

To: Commander, Air Group
From: Rees, Ingalo, Captain
Subject: Combat Air Patrol

Morning sir,

As of yesterday, before the Invasion, you had me and Lt. Brangle scheduled to fly CAP this morning at 0800. At this time, has there been any change to that plan due to yesterdays attacks?

Thank you.

Ingalo tapped the SEND key, dressed and headed to breakfast.

Destroyer Douglas J. Griffyn
Docked on the opposite side of Ragnar from Libra
Day 01 0620 Hours

"Comms, open a channel to all civilian vessels," the Executive Officer ordered. Moments later the communications officer nodded to him. Johnson picked up a mic and spoke deliberately.

[Attention all Civilian Vessels, move behind the Anchorage, on the opposite side of the eye of the storm, so that in the event of a cylon attack you will be defended,] Johnson said on frequency 8386.

About 10 minutes earlier Colonel Herald had left with Mongoose in one of the recon Raptors, headed to the *Libra*. Herald had left his XO in command and had given him explicit orders on what to do in case the cylons found the fleet.

"Hard seal," Braddock said as the gauges confirmed O2 in the air lock leading to Ragnar Anchorage.

[All right, send our people in, and find anything we can use. Coordinate with *Libra's* Deck Chief and see what parts they need, and what we need,] Johnson said into the wireless to CPO Luna.

Griffyn's port flight pod, at the docking hatch:

The Marines were standing by, ahead of the deck crew, ready to go in and check things out. With a groan the metal doors in front of them swung open, and they were greeted with darkness.

"Okay, get the lights on," Luna told the deck crew.

Marines fanned out in all directions, giving the okay for the deck crew to follow.

Luna pulled out his wireless radio: [*Libra* Deck Chief, this is Chief Luna from the *Griffyn*, requesting a rendezvous point. My orders were to contact you and coordinate the supply transfer to *Griffyn*,] he said, awaiting a reply from *Libra's* Deck Chief.

PO2 Alexandra MacLean
On Ragnar Anchorage
Day 01 0630 Hours

Mac jumped when the wireless hand-held went off. "Frak," she muttered, talking it from the leg pocket of her coveralls. She pressed the transmit button and replied, "Ah, Chief Luna. This is Petty Officer MacLean from the *Libra*. I'm on Deck Charlie, Station 32 Baker, where are you? We can meet halfway - do you have maps of the Anchorage?"

She released the transmit button and waited for an answer. "Never carried this thing before," she murmured to herself, glad she'd thought to take it with her.

Tommy Turner Templeton, Civilian
Day 01 0105 Hours

Previously on Battlestar *Libra*:

Tommy Templeton had just been released from prison after serving 10 years. Boarding the Liner *Astral Dawn*, he'd set off for a 'Parolee Tour' of the Twelve Worlds. Thus far, though, the best part of his tour had been meeting a nice blonde named Toni in one of the *Dawn's* lounges.

Tommy left the lounge feeling a little buzzed and headed for his cabin. He kept thinking about the blonde-haired woman, Toni. Yeah, Toni. He kept repeating the image of her wink in his head over and over again. So much so he didn't realize he was already standing in his cabin. And of course Jeff was there laying on his bed reading some documents.

"It's about time you got back."

Tommy went to his own bed. He didn't want to hear any of it. He was tired and just wanted to sleep.

"Before you go to sleep--" Jeff went for his briefcase and sat down in a chair.

Tommy's thoughts turned sour. Oh, no, every time he opens that briefcase he gets documents out on me and proceeds to start preaching to me. Why does he do this every time? He never talks about himself, maybe because he is holding something back. That would explain why he has to talk about me all the time. Maybe I can use this to my advantage.

Tommy hadn't had any alcohol for a long time, ten years in fact. And for a large man you would think he would be able to consume large amounts of it without much affect. But he had no tolerance level and was feeling quite buzzed.

"Tom we have to go over some things."

"Please... Jeff, not now. I'm a little tired and just wanna get some sleep."

"Sorry, this will just take a moment, Now its obvious you wont have a planet to..."

Tired, buzzed, and now annoyed, Tommy quickly decided he had no interest in listening. It was getting to much for him to endure, on and on and on Jeff went. This man would never shut up. He talked all the time.

Tommy got up to his feet and shrugged off his tiredness.

"Go to go!" Jeff's expression turned dark at the interruption. "I know Jeff!" Tommy said, trying to be conciliatory, but his anger showed.

"Tom, you don't have to get mad."

He still was. "Ever since I stepped foot aboard this ship it's been 'Tommy you cant do this', 'Tommy you cant to that!'"

"I'm sorry, I just..." he stopped for a moment. "Just..."

The buzz Tommy had had was gone, his mind cleared. He saw an opportunity to get out of this room for awhile and also set the

record straight as to who is doing what, whenever they wanted, the 'who' being him.

Tom decided to lower his tone to a more gentle and frank one. "Just wondered if any of your family survived the attack." Time to take advantage.

"...Yeah I mean...Yeah"

The priest was starting to show in Tommy's manner. He knew how to play the part well, for himself, not for the Lords of Kobol. He stepped towards Jeff and got down on one knee. "Tell me about your family."

"Tell you, why should I tell you?" Jeff's expression was reluctant, confused.

"I'm a priest."

"You were a priest."

"Once you are, you're always."

"Well, I live on Picon, or rather I lived..." The tears were starting to fill his eyes as Jeff recalled his life. "On Picon I was married, and I had four children."

Tom could see the moment when he would turn the tables on Jeff and get the upper hand. It would be cruel but necessary. But not quite yet, he had to bait him a little more. "For how long and how old?"

Jeff was starting to sob now. "I was with her fourteen years... the kids were thirteen, eight, seven, and two."

"Yeah, I know how you feel, Jeff," Tommy said, feigning compassion. "I once had a wonderful family myself."

"What do you think happened to them - do you think they..."

And here it was, the moment he would give the other side of the table to him. "Lived? Ah, hell no... I'm sure they're quite dead!"

"What?!" Jeff exclaimed as another sob wracked his body. "They might have..."

"No, if they were on the planet at the time of the attacks, they're gone." Tommy paused for the span of a breath. "Well, where were they?"

"Yes ,they were on the planet." Jeff was starting to have a panic attack.

"Then, yeah, they would be dead. They got nuked, no one can escape that." Tommy could tell his words where stinging. Now for the final stake. He stood, grabbing Jeff's wrist, locking it in a very hard grip.

"And if you don't stop frakking with me over all this government bullshit..." He gave Jeff a very hard stare.

Jeff looked very scared and was still crying, "I thought you said you were a priest."

Tommy let go of the mans arm and quite candidly said, "Oh I am." Then in a much more harsh voice he added, "I'm a part timer, and this isn't part of that time."

Tommy started towards the door and looked at Jeff one more time. "I'm going to go get drunk. Which means I'm going to have more than one, Also when you're done crying a river I expect for you to be very quiet when I return. I would like to pass out."

He grabbed the door handle and opened the door. Without looking at Jeff, said, "May the Lords of Kobol be with you!"

Hunt, on the Demeter
Day 01 0550 Hours

Hunt was nowhere near as recovered as he'd thought, although the food had done a lot to help. Even so, things spun around when he first stood up. He recognized Buster's strong arm steadying him from when the big man had caught him in the feed storage room. "Thanks," he muttered, holding onto Buster.

Buster's reply was somewhere between a scoff and a grunt. Ferdie, next to them, tsk-tsk'ed, "You're still too weak to be up and about, Hunt. I should've noticed. Terence, can you help me take him back to his room?"

The big man didn't reply, but merely began half walking, half carrying Hunt. As Ferdie followed, Clive called out to her, "Ms. Bello? A word?" She turned to him, and Buster continued on.

Once back in the infirmary, Hunt lay back on the bed with relief. His left hand was throbbing a little and he put his left arm across his eyes.

Gotta watch my step here, he thought. Who knows what they'll do to me when they find out about me. He pondered a moment. If the Colonies are all destroyed, would they be able to find out about me? He heard Ms Ferdie talking to Clive quietly.

Clive had looked in Hunt's direction as he spoke with her; his face was stern and forbidding. Hunt had seen that expression before: it was a cop's face, and Ms. Ferdie had said he was in charge of *Demeter* security. That meant he was *Demeter's* cop. Hunt couldn't hear everything that the two of them were talking about, but he HAD heard the cop say he 'knew the type', and ask Ms. Ferdie what would the captain do. Then Buster turned to the passageway and he could hear no more.

Frakking cop, Hunt sighed. I wonder how long I'm going to be stuck here on the *Demeter*. probably awhile, if what that lieutenant said is true. I need to find a bolt-hole. Hell, this ship has got to have a place to hide. He rubbed his eyes wearily. I don't have to worry about the Regals or the cops on Aerilon anymore, and now I got to deal with a cop right in my face. He rolled over onto his stomach. I'm frakking tired of this shit.

**PO2 Alexandra MacLean and CPO Paul Luna
Ragnar Station
Day 01 0630 Hours**

Mac had responded to Luna's wireless call: "I'm on Deck Charlie, Station 32 Baker, where are you? We can meet halfway--do you have maps of the Station?"

Luna transmitted back with surprise: "Isn't Chief Sutton there?"

Mac closed her eyes briefly. Into the wireless she said, "No, Chief, sorry, he was killed doing damage control. Commander Rodrigues, uh, assigned me his duties."

Luna's eyes went blank as the news hit him. They had lost so many, and now Chief Sutton?! He brought the hand-held to his mouth "Copy that... um... who is this?"

"Petty Officer Second Class Alexandra MacLean, Chief." The old man gave me the insignia, but... I have no idea if that means I'm really promoted. I'd only be a PO First...

"Oh, well, I'm sorry to hear about the Chief. We'll talk about it later, but yes I can meet you halfway," Luna replied.

Mac looked at her map. "How about Deck Charlie, Station 15? Would that work for you?"

Luna pulled out his map also, the old decrepit piece of paper it was. "Yes, that's fine with me, see you in a bit."

Captain Don Gibbs, on Battlestar *Libra*
Day 01 0549 Hours CUT

The captain of Astral Dawn had been escorted to a conference room by a Marine and a junior officer. Without a mistake, he knew the man in the corner was from Colonial Heavy 941; his Intersun uniform was a giveaway.

"Captain Didimour?" Don Gibbs asked as he walked over. "Hi, Don Gibbs from Astral Dawn."

The two shook hands. Before they could do more, another man entered the room. He wore a captain's uniform, but not Intersun. After a quick look around, he approached Gibbs and Didimour and introduced himself.

"Good Day. I am Captain Epenito Brindza, of the freighter *Ensiferum*" he said, extending his hand. "You can call me 'Peni' for short."

"Captain Brindza, hello," one of the Intersun captains responded, shaking Brindza's hand. "Richard Didmour, Colonial Heavy 941." Turning to his fellow Intersun officer, he added, "And this is Don Gibbs of Astral Dawn."

"Nice to meet you, Captain." Gibbs said amiably, while shaking hands. "Peni, did you say? Call me Don."

CPO Paul Luna, on Ragnar Station
Day 01 0640 Hours

Mac told Specialist Benedict where she was headed, then trotted off toward the rendezvous point.

Luna arrived at the rendezvous point with his crew, and three Marines: PFC Nathan Ball, Private James Hagy, and Corporal Rory Kinkle. He sat there and wondered where the *Libra* petty officer was. No one had been in this place for quite sometime, and the entire area was dark.

As Mac headed out, almost immediately she was stopped by Lance Corporal Benoit.

"Hey, Mac, where you think you're going? You can't go there without Marine escort." Jo said, her smile taking the sting out of the words. "Captain's orders, you know."
"I'm going to meet Chief Luna, Deck Chief from the *Griffyn*," Mac explained.

"Oh, okay." They started walking down the dark passageway. Something struck Jo, though, and she asked, "Uh Mac?, where's Chief Sutton? How come he isn't meeting the other Chief himself?"

"Chief Sutton was killed when a causeway collapsed," Mac said tonelessly. Gods, I wish... She sighed. "The old man told me to take over his duties."

"Sacre bleu! Chief Sutton... He was a good man, no? I'm sorry, Mac."

"I'm sorry, too," Mac replied. I can't deal with this right now.

Chief Luna was already there when Mac arrived with her Marine entourage. "Chief, I'm Mac." Mac held out her hand. Nice looking guy... younger than Chief Sutton... She stuffed the thought down.

"Nice to meet you Mac, I'm Chief Luna," Luna replied, offering his hand. GODS SHE'S YOUNG, he thought.

Jo didn't like it. With Chief Sutton dead, the Chief of the Deck of the *Griffyn* outranked the person in charge in the *Libra*. It wasn't... proper!

Mac shuffled through the pages of maps she had, shining a flashlight on them. "Here's the latest I've got, but I have no idea how up to date it is. My people have already found some stuff over at Station 32 - Mark VII parts - and it looks like there's more at station 33 and 34. Plenty to go around."

Luna was looking over Mac's shoulder at the map, and listening intently to her words. "Okay, so what do you all have dibs on," he asked.

Jo and Dan merely stood there, their eyes peeled for any movement around the two knuckledraggers. Dan thought, Frak, she's even smaller up close!

"Okay, what are the majority of ships you all have? Most of our ships are MkII's, with the exception of Delphinus and Solstice Vipers, but most of ours are MkII's," Luna repeated, nodding to himself as he mentally reviewed the lists.

Mac gave a short laugh. "I don't think 'dibs' counts any more, Chief. We need to get as much as we can - and we don't have much time - and later on sort out who needs what the most."

"Yeah true," he said. She's direct and to the point, he thought. "So, we need to get moving then," he replied.

Thank the gods he knows his job and doesn't want to get into a pissing contest, Mac thought with relief. "Let's go," she agreed.

The crews of the *Libra* and *Griffyn* worked swiftly but carefully, getting supplies and parts to be loaded into the two ships.

***Libra* Conference Room**

Day 01 0554 Hours

Lt. Patrick Cardelli, Inga and Xenthais had traveled together in the *Terpsichore*.

The initial meeting between Cardelli and Xenthais was somewhat tense, but with Inga's soothing intervention, things calmed considerably, so that when they landed on the *Libra* Cardelli and Merconi were, if not friendly, at least cordial with each other.

When the trio walked into the conference room, they noticed five people already there - two women and three men. It was easy to tell the Intersun captain, as well as those from the Pan Galactic and the *Astral Dawn*: their uniforms gave them away.

The Pan Galactic captain is Heather Bevfah, so the other woman must be Hawk Pierce, Inga thought, heading their way.

Xenthais, being Xenthais, sauntered in like she owned the place and announced to all and sundry, "Xenthais Merconi, *Terpsichore*. Pleased to meet all of you."

Inga sighed. Twenty years and she hadn't changed a bit - she still knew how to make an entrance!

"Major!" Don Gibbs yelled his salutation across the room. "I thought you would have Kalrk in tow again!"

Xenthais laughed her trademark husky laugh. "I'm afraid not, Captain Gibbs. Kalrk and that sweet ship of his are hard birds to catch."

***Libra* Conference Room**

Day 01 0615 Hours

Rodrigues had just left Ragnar where he'd personally checked on the resupply efforts. On the way to the conference room he met with Colonel Herald who brought him up to speed on the recon to the colonies. He knew what the answer was already, however he wanted to be sure.

The ball game had changed now. No longer were the members of the colonies fighting to defend their livelihood. Now the few left were fighting for their very survival. As he and Herald reached the door to the conference room he hesitated long enough to turn to his Destroyer commander. "We're going to have to put up a united front. They'll need our protection and we'll need their help as well."

Herald nodded in complete agreement with the Commander, and followed behind him into the Conference Room.

The doors parted and the two men entered. "Forgive me for the delay ladies and gentlemen. I am Commander Benito Rodrigues. This is Commander Brennan Herald." He paused for a moment, surveying the assemblage. "I believe we have a lot to discuss."

Liza Liala, CBI
Battlestar Libra
Day 01 0612 Hours

Liza Liala, Kalrk and their escorts walked through the door, and were greeted by the sight of a long conference table, quickly filling up with people clad in various forms of civilian uniform - the ship's captains. She, Kalrk, and their two Marine escorts entered... she slid quietly, as stealthily as she could manage, given the situation, into the room, around the table, and into an empty chair. However, in this instance, she admitted, stealth of any kind probably was impossible. At a table full of various uniforms hers was, as of yet, the only black tailored suit present.

Psy followed her charges in to the room with Kalrk's last words still echoing in her brain - "We'll talk about it later." Every time she thought of it her stomach got queasy. The fact that he intended the conversation to be about her father had not even entered her mind.

Libra Conference Room
Day 01 0615 Hours

The captains introduced themselves and their ships to the imposing

Libra Commander: Heather Bevfah, from *Pan Galactic Flight 76*; Donald Gibbs, of the *Astral Dawn*; Inga Mueller, captain of the freighter *Demeter*; Richard Didimour, from *Colonial Heavy 941*; Peni Brindza, of the *Ensiferum*; Gabriel Keramidas from the *Grandeur*; Xenthais Merconi, with her private yacht *Terpsichore*; Hawkeye Pierce, of the research vessel *Iasoan*; Kalrk, and his fighter *Mercurius*; Lucius Remus, of the *Palatine*; Ivan Wilson, from the *Morning Angel*... and then the other invitees, Liza Liala from C.B.I. and Lt, Patrick Cardelli, the injured raptor pilot.

Just when all the introductions were made and the meeting was about to start, the hatch was opened once more and a tall and gangly man wearing Captain's insignia entered the room.

"Sorry to be late but we had a kind of... problem over on *Perseus*. I'm Captain Charles Baker, *Perseus* XO. Major Cole was injured during the fight with Heron, Commander, but he sends his regards."

Luxury Liner Palatine
Day 01 0520 Hours

Captain Remus put the phone down. "I'm to go to the Battlestar *Libra*. We're going to talk about what we will do next. Take care of the ship until I get back. Please inform the shuttle pilot that I'm coming down there."

"Yes sir." Baca replied.

Captain Remus walk out and proceeded to the hanger deck. On the way he met Arclan Medes, an Engineering Specialist.

"Ah Specialist Medes. How are the engines?"

"Fine sir. We shouldn't have any problems like Morning Angel did."

"That is good. Please inform me of any change."

"Yes sir."

Captain Remus continued on his way. When he reached the hanger deck the shuttle pilot was standing there by one of Palatines shuttles.

"Greetings Ms. Procris."

"Greetings sir. Ready to go?"

"Yes. Let's get over there as soon as we can. I'd like to get this over with and see what we're going to do."

They boarded the shuttle and were on their way.

Civilian Starliner Morning Angel
Day 01 0500 Hours

Ivan Wilson, captain of the Morning Angel, received a call. It was a call to go to the Battlestar *Libra* and discuss what to do now.

"Take care of the ship while I'm gone," Wilson said as he prepared to leave the Angel's cockpit. It was an unnecessary order, but Wilson gave it out of habit.

"Yes, sir," the XO replied. Dorian Vorenius had been Wilson's second for nearly a year, and he had expected the directive.

Captain Wilson walked out, into the First Class cabin and saw Anika Leein, the senior flight attendant on the Angel.

"Ms. Leein, will you please see to the passengers? I need to go for a little while."

"Yes sir," Leein responded.

Captain Wilson went on to the passenger compartments. There he saw a family. The Exters were the owners of Morning Angel. Robert Exter was the head of the family and of Exter Shipping.

Captain Wilson walked up to Robert and said "Mr. Exter, I need to speak with you."

"What is it, Captain Wilson?" Robert asked looking up. A friendly tone was in his voice.

"I need to go over to the Battlestar *Libra* and I wanted to know if you'd like to go with me."

"Yes I would Captain."

Robert got up, then leaned down and kissed his wife, Rena. He said "I'll see you later," and walked out.

"What are we to do?" Robert asked Captain Wilson.

"We will be discussing what to do next. After that I don't know."

"Well I guess we will decide where to go from here. Anywhere is better than the Colonies so I don't care where. I just want to get my

family away from here."

"Yes sir that would be good," Wilson agreed. "You've been good to me in the short time I've known you and I'd hate to see anything happen to you or your family."

**Perseus Infirmary,
Time: unknown**

"Keep it closed until I tell you Richard."

The Doc's voice was serious, so Cole reined in his desire to try and open his eye. What if it was really damaged that bad?

"Okay, Richard. Open it."

There it was, the moment of truth. He wasn't even sure if he wanted to know the answer to the question that had been on his mind since his talk with Gabby, but before his courage left him Cole just forced himself to open the eye.

He was greeted with an absolute blackness.

**Battlestar Libra conference room
Captain's meeting
Day 01 0616 Hours**

As Kalrk held the satchel with the cylon device inside, he was committing the faces of the attendees to memory, attaching their names to each image as all introduced themselves.

When Kalrk introduced himself, Xenthais Merconi had given him a small wave, acknowledging their previous cooperation. She exuded confidence, seeming at home among the clearly-worried civilian captains.

Peni Brindza obviously thought himself the smartest of the captains, bragging that he had maintained wireless silence yesterday, then parked his ship on a moonlet to hide before making the jump to Ragnar.

Ivan Wilson of Morning Angel seemed more confident than most, until the man next to him introduced himself. That man was Robert Exter, owner of Morning Angel and Exter Shipping, and Wilson assumed an air of oily deference as Exter spoke.

Wilson, you boot licker, Kalrk thought to himself.

Just when all the introductions were made and the meeting was about to start, the hatch was opened once more and a tall and gangly man wearing a Fleet uniform with Captain's insignia entered the room.

"Sorry to be late but we had a kind of... problem over on *Perseus*. I'm Captain Charles Baker, *Perseus* XO. Major Cole was injured during the fight with Heron, Commander, but he sends his regards..."

0618 Hours

Kalrk considered the officer's statement. "*Perseus*' CO is injured and can't make the meeting, so the XO does - that makes sense enough. But why is the destroyer's CO a Major, and their XO a Captain? It would have been customary for the CO to be a Colonel, or above. Had yesterday's combat given *Perseus* a new commander?" Kalrk wondered. He had planned to drop these civilian ships under the care of the military. Now, it seemed the war was advancing a number of junior officers, and he wasn't so sure that they were ready to lead a fleet of civilian refugees.

Also, there was a cylon on Grandeur, and Cardelli's ECO had been a cylon... there could be a cylon on one or more of the military ships and civilian ships.

Kalrk decided he had to stay, for now.

Battlestar *Libra* conference room Captain's meeting

The room was full of people busy interacting but Psy was strangely oblivious to it all. Only one person in the room claimed her attention. She kept finding herself peeking at him covertly from under her lashes and then forcing herself to look away. This is ridiculous, she thought to herself, I'm supposed to be watching him, so stop hiding it, you silly girl. she tried to convince herself but to avail.

She continued to stand there, not really listening to what was being said. When she tried to scratch an itch on her head she got a handful of gauze instead. Psy turned red - she had forgotten about the turban of gauze she wore. Now, reminded of it, she for the first time in her life found herself mortified and worried about her appearance to another person, and all she knew was she had to get that gauze off her head right now.

Quickly she reached up and started to unravel it. The material was

thin and stretchy, and she made only minimal progress against it. "Frak it." she whispered, and without even thinking of it further she drew her combat knife and started to hack away at the turban. Pieces of gauze floated and flew everywhere in the back of the room and the other Marines stared at her. Hugo leaned over, his expression puzzled, and whispered "Are you OK?"

Stopping in mid-stroke with the knife, she had to ask herself the same question. She decided she would have to pay the doc a visit when she was done here, because clearly there had to be something physically wrong with her. She also figured that now, as she was almost done removing the turban, she should finish her work. With a few more strokes she was gauze free.

Libra Conference Room
Day 01 0625 Hours

Rodrigues eyed the group of ship captains as they sat, or stood, in the space of the conference room. Also in attendance were a few persons whom were not the captains of ships and one person in a military flight suit. As strange as it seemed he wasn't about to try and enforce military rule on a bunch of civvies. That would come later if need be. He picked up a remote from the table and dimmed the lights. On the far wall a screen lit up, showing an orbital shot of Picon. Flashes of light erupted all over the surface, creating clouds of smoke almost instantly. Images of raiders and several baseships in orbit made the final touch.

"This video image," Rodrigues began. "was made approximately one hour ago by a raptor from the *Griffyn*. We sent raptors to each of the colonies to assess the damage from the cylon attacks. I am sad to say all of the colonies look similar to this one." Rodrigues watched for a reaction from the assembly of people in the room. Patrick Cardelli glanced up at the Commander, his face grim. "From what I heard in my Raptor, most of the military took a beating. Is there anyone else left capable of fighting back?"

Rodrigues looked upon the young pilot. "I'm sorry Lieutenant. And you are?"

Cardelli stood, and saluted formally. "Cardelli, sir. Lieutenant Patrick M. Cardelli out of Aerilon... Nova Squadron." He glanced over at Kalrk. "I'm here because my ECO was collaborating with the cylons, otherwise my ship probably would have been shut down and destroyed too." Not knowing what else to say, he waited.

Cardelli could have kicked himself for jumping up like that, in front of all the Captains present. Even if most of them were civilians they

were the people whom he served.

But Patrick had slept through most of the night with a cast on his arm while everyone else around him had continued to work. He had even eaten whereas most people present had not, and it was gnawing at his gut that things were happening so fast that an extra minute's pause could literally mean the difference between life and death.

Dammit, he wanted everyone to know about the collaborators, while there was still someone left to tell. But he was military, and the collaborators were a military problem. He was not the ranking officer, either. Not knowing what else to say he waited.

On hearing this Psy whipped her head around, away from HIM and began to pay attention to what was being said at the table. cylon collaborator... Oh my Gods, the fire starter! Psy thought to her self. What if what I saw on the deck was exactly what I thought it was initially? Psy continued listening as more information about cylon collaborators was revealed. She decided she was going to have to speak up - the commander needed to know what she had seen on the deck and that there was a possibility that one of these collaborators was on the *Libra*.

Not knowing what else to say, Cardelli had waited.

Kalrk stood up, holding the white machine up for all to see.

"Commander, this was in the possession of Lt. Cardelli's ECO. As best as I can tell, it's cylon, not Colonial."

For the president of K Industries, known throughout the Twelve Colonies as the inventor of EarTunes, and a few other personal miniature electronic gadgets, to say "As best as I can tell", made it clear in a few minds present that it was what he had deduced.

"And the problem is bigger than one ECO. There is also the matter that occurred on Grandeur. Captain Keramidas.. Gabriel.. if you would?"

Rodrigues held up a hand. "Mister Kalrk, one moment please. I'll give everyone fair chance to speak their piece but please remember you are on a military vessel and we require a certain restraint, more than you all are accustomed to on the bridges of your own ships. Please allow me to take things one at a time. I assure you it will go smoother."

Nodding slightly, Rodrigues motioned to the chair Cardelli had stood from. "I see you've also got an injured wing. Have a seat,

Lieutenant," he smiled and then continued. "As Lieutenant Cardelli stated we have taken a beating. The Fleet is all but gone. The cylons obtained complete surprise on the colonies as well as in space. We were supposed to link up with any remaining warships here. As of now it looks like the Fleet consists only of the *Libra*, the *Griffyn*, and the *Perseus*."

"Now, Mr. Kalrk, please continue."

"Thank you, Commander." Kalrk stood up again.

"I was saying that Captain Keramidas had a problem aboard his ship. I was asking him to inform you, inform all here, of the situation on Grandeur. But, I think instead, Liza Liala of CBI would be the better judge if such a topic should be discussed, with such a large audience."

He took his seat. He's the commander, Kalrk, not you. This is a group of strangers, not a Board of your Directors, he reminded himself.

As they waited for a response from Liala, Xenthais Merconi exchanged an alarmed look with Inga Mueller. cylon collaborators?!? In the fleet?

Inga was already aware, having heard Lt. Cardelli's story in the *Demeter* infirmary. "That's probably why they could achieve such an absolute victory in such a short time," she said under her breath to her friend. Xenthais nodded grimly and leaned forward in her seat, not wanting to miss anything.

"Then allow me to make that an easy decision," Rodrigues said. He was instantly concerned with the new information Kalrk presented to him. "At the current time this is still a military situation. As such we all have major decisions to make and planning to do. In addition with all of the events that have transpired I feel it might be a bit premature to discuss all of this in an open forum. So I ask that for the time being this remains between the government and the military. Fair enough?" he paused for the briefest of seconds. "Ms. Liala I do wish to speak with you after this meeting. Mister Kalrk as well."

Xenthais asked Inga, loud enough so it was heard across the room, "What government? From all we've heard, there IS no Colonial government any more."

Liza Liala nodded her agreement to Rodrigues. Excellent. She would not have wanted to discuss such matters in front of such a large audience. The fewer people who knew the details, the better. She sat silently, intending to now remain so throughout the rest of the meeting, until her private session with Rodrigues. Instead of

speaking she would use the time to watch and assess those around her.

So far, her assessment of Rodrigues was exactly what she had hoped to find - a competent, solid leader. The civilian captains were a bit more a mixed bag, a variety of personalities and personas across the spectrum... as was, she admitted, to be expected.

So much for remaining silent. Liala couldn't leave Merconi's comment stand unanswered. She squeezed her lips together, steeling herself for what she was about to say.

"Correct, Captain Merconi." Despite herself, her eyes closed at the memories, and it was all she could do to keep her voice level. Everyone here knew by now, it seemed, that the government had fallen... though she had no idea if Rodrigues did yet or not. But she knew...

With her now-destroyed transmitter....

She had heard it fall. Witnessed it. Heard it all, as she was helpless to reply, unable to report in.

"President Adar and his Cabinet died on the Colonies, along with the rest of the government, save Secretary of Education Laura Roslin. She was sworn in as President... But perished along with her fleet at the coordinates we just left."

She did not bother to say she had heard them die, some of them, on the Colonies, over the wireless on her transmitter. She didn't have the heart to say it, and it made little difference, at any rate. Little difference to anyone but her. Their panicked cries and orders would, she knew, be frozen in her mind forever. All she could do was block them out and do what she was trained to do.

Handle the situation. Keep control.

Captain Brindza had been listening intently to each speaker. Who is with holding information? he wondered, as his nature was naturally suspicious. Who is lying and who is transacting with the frakking cylons? When Liza Liala finished speaking, Brindza decided that she hadn't said everything she'd been thinking. He turned to Kalrk, trying to read his reaction. He recalled now where he'd seen Kalrk before, why the man seemed familiar to him. Brindza resolved to stay a little after the meeting and see if he could speak to Kalrk privately.

Across the room Lt. Patrick Cardelli stepped forward. "We're here for the ammo and supplies, right?" he blurted out. He looked warily at Liza. "The fact that the government is destroyed means that we are at

war."

He paused for a moment, waiting for someone to say something, but they were thinking over what he said. "Do you have a fuel depot..." he went on, "because if this fleet is out in space for any significant length of time at all we're going to need a LOT of tylium."

He looked intently at Rodrigues. "My Dad has tylium mines throughout the colonies. He also has a huge headquarters out on Cassiopeia, a moon orbiting the outer planet in this system. There's a military base on that moon as well... it's probably gone but the mine is primarily underground. If the cylons didn't nuke the moon then that will be our best chance to find fuel. Those of us who survived may or may not have a vote in all of this, but as long as it's still a democracy then I vote we get the hell out of this system while we still can."

Commander Rodrigues looked from Cardelli to Liala, and then to Captain Merconi. When he spoke, his words were calm and measured, but firm with the confidence of command. "Captain Merconi, I am very aware of your concerns. As Ms. Liala has said President Adar and the rest of the Colonial presidential line of succession are gone. However let me ask you something. First of all how many people are left in all of your ships? Do you readily believe the civilians will agreeably be led by the military? I think not. Let's face it folks, I assume you need protection. I am willing to do my best to assist you in that endeavor. The three vessels left in this battle group, though formidable, are better served in protecting the people left instead of conducting a suicide run against the cylon fleet."

Rodrigues was doing his best to control his rising disdain for Merconi. Though probably misplaced he had the distinct feeling this one captain may become a problem.

"Now we do have government officials people. As such they are now the nexus of our government. I for one will work with them to the betterment of the people. In addition the military will be used in its traditional role for defense and protection. Now, Captain Merconi, are you still convinced there is no government?"

Liza Liala heard his words... but her mind could barely process them.

For the love of the Gods, she thought, I came here to tell him about the saboteur on the Grandeur! I came here to report. To request back up. To go back afterward, and get my man! Stop the collaborator! I didn't come here to become the frakking next President!

She was in public. She couldn't show her reactions, but neither, to

her shame, could she hide it all. Instead she froze, staring out at everything. She should have seen it. She should have seen it all building, but her powers of analysis failed her when it came to that which she did not wish to see. She had heard them die. She had waited for that new leader, on the other side of their next jump, to take the reigns and make it all alright. She had seen the wreckage of what was left of Roslyn's ships, then, and she had shrugged it off and resumed pursuing the saboteurs. She had never seen this coming, even once she had realized there was no one else left.

She was no a public leader. She never had been - her line of work did not lend itself to such. For the love of the Gods, she spent most of her life undercover. Now he was asking her to come out from that cover, and become something else.

No. He was not asking, was he? Because what he was saying was true - the people would not be satisfied with martial law. Not for long, a day, a week, perhaps a month... and no further. She knew enough of human nature to know that. He had no choice in what he was saying.

And she had no choice, either. She maintained her silence, waiting for someone to speak next, while she stared out at her future. And for the first time in her life it frightened her. She wasn't ready, she wasn't trained - not for this. She had walked into this room with a gun. She would walk out, most likely, with a bodyguard.

Colonel Brennan Herald - in Captain's Meeting

Cylon collaborators, he thought over and over, finding the idea incomprehensible. The images of the destroyed Colonies only added to the stress of the news.

Colonel Herald continued to think of the Heron, the ship under cylon control. *No one can be trusted then, we MUST be careful*, he thought. He looked around at all the civilian captains. *A diverse looking bunch, but they're all that's left*, he thought.

He perked up when Merconi mentioned the government, and the talk of the future of the government from the Commander. He looked at the CBI Agent intently - she seemed to have an air about her, that she had a good read on things.

Quote:

"Captain Merconi I am very aware of your concerns. As Ms. Liala has said President Adar and the rest of the colonial presidency are gone. However let me ask you something. First of all how

many people are left in all of your ships? Do you readily believe the civilians will agreeably be led by the military? I think not. Let's face it folks, I assume you need protection. I am hereby willing to do my best to assist you in that endeavor. The three vessels left in this battle group, though formidable, are better served in protecting the people left instead of conducting a suicide run against the cylon fleet."

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"Now, we do have government officials, people. As such they are now the nexus of our government. I for one will work with them to the betterment of the people. In addition the military will be used in its traditional role for defense and protection."

"Now Captain Merconi are you still convinced there is no government?"

Xenthais rose to her feet. "Yes, Commander, I am still convinced there is no government. And I'm also convinced that you're absolutely correct; what little is left of the Colonial military might is better used protecting what's left of the people, instead of conducting suicide missions against the cylons. And yes, I do believe the people WILL accept military rule, at least for a while because, let's face it, it is much easier to accept martial law than to be ruled by some fourth level bureaucrat just out of the schoolroom.

Rodrigues looked at Merconi with a cold stare. "Please sit down Captain. This is a military ship, my ship and as long as I am still in command of her we use my rules. I asked everyone here so we could discuss the current situation, not point fingers. We're about a hair's width from being wiped out by the cylons. Let's not help them."

Xenthais smiled, just as coldly. "Excellent, Commander. I have no problem following rules, military rules." And then she sat.

Inga rolled her eyes.

"Pardon me, Commander, Major Merconi," Don Gibbs stood up. "Perhaps we should be focused on surviving today, and tomorrow, and less on the frakkin' government, or lack thereof. The cylons are here in Colonial space, and we need to figure out what our next move of SURVIVAL will be." He sat down as quickly as he had stood.

"Now that we've all taken a break," Rodrigues continued. "We need to address our current situation. Lieutenant Cardelli can you please

tell me more about the tyllium mine you were speaking of?"

Patrick smiled wryly.

"If you haven't heard of the Cardelli Corporation, you will," the Lieutenant said with a chuckle. "My father, Mason Cardelli, is the greediest, most egotistical son of a bitch I've ever known. I joined the military to get away from him - he kept pressuring me to join his team."

Cardelli watched all of the anxious glances surrounding him. "But he's usually at his headquarters on that moon. And he does know how to hire capable people. They either make money for him or he steps on them like bugs."

Patrick paused as he pondered the facts he knew about the mine. "Most of the smaller mines are on the colonies... they can't really dig because of pollution and population concerns. But they've got a big fat tyllium mine out there on Cassiopeia. The only drawback I can think of is that the military base there probably made the moon a primary target."

Rodrigues looked at the young man again, thinking as he spoke. "What are the chances your father will be willing to part with some of his ore?"

Patrick listened to the Commander's question carefully and then all of the emotion of the past 24 hours came roaring out of him. He threw back his head and laughed, a big belly laugh that permeated the room and caused at least one or two people to jump in surprise.

"Are you kidding me?" Lt. Cardelli said as he calmed back down again. "You guys have guns - if he's heard about the cylons he'll give you anything you want for military protection." Patrick mentally reviewed again what he knew of his father. "He'll want a say in any sort of government or dictatorship that forms. If you're not careful, he will make himself the dictator."

Psy stood there listening to them all and came to one conclusion: They were all dead. Yep, and all of them sitting at that table were just oblivious to this fact. Her back was starting to hurt again, not as much as before as her wounds were already healing. The woman called Xen just jumped up and got into the commanders face then another captain got up, actually said something of sense and the commander just ignored him so he could have a pissing contest with pretty brunette. Yep, they were dead and she was starting to know what a kindergarten teacher must feel like.

"Bullfrak," Kalrk blurted. He remained seated but raised his voice.

"Your daddy will give us the ore for the military protection because we are all helping one another... we all gain."

Patrick looked at the overconfident civilian with a small smile. "Whatever you say," he replied. "I'll let you be the one to tell him that."

Kalrk smiled back at Cardelli, then turned his attention back on the Commander, who was speaking to Herald.

His thoughts, though, were on Cardelli. *I'll be glad to tell your daddy, boy. If anyone wants to live in the past.. I'll let them, but I won't let them hinder the survival of these ships. If your daddy wants to piss me off, then I'll take care of him.*

Meanwhile Psy could not help but snort at Cardelli's comment about his father. It brought back to her mind all the footage of Picon that had been shown earlier in the meeting and the possibility of her own father's survival. It would be on pure luck or - as she was sure in her father's case - pure stubbornness for anyone to survive the devastation. She sighed and guessed that her dandelion field was no more. Well, at least she still had the picture of it.

Rodrigues closed his eyes... just lovely. "Okay Lieutenant, I appreciate your input. We'll work on this more later. Now I want to go over our current tactical situation." He looked at Herald. "Colonel the floor is yours."

**Colonel Brennan Herald
- in Captain's Meeting**

" Thank you sir," Herald said as he stood.

"Okay, the current tactical situation isn't good. If the cylons jumped in above the storm, they would have us cornered and there would be little we could do about it. But jumping inside of this storm is suicide, plotting an FTL jump into a safe area is next to impossible. So we could stand here and fight, knowing that we would likely lose. I assume you, the civilian captains, don't wish to just sit here and be destroyed?"

Herald grabbed a clipboard with some papers on it. "Right now, we have six ships that are armed: *Griffyn, Libra, Perseus, Terpischore, Mercurius, and Ensiferum*. Mister Kalrk, how many Raiders do you estimate *Mercurius* can take on at one time? Captain Merconi... same question about *Terpischore*? If my information is correct, the *Terpischore* possesses SOME weaponry, but not enough to survive in an all out ambush.

Captain Brindza, I have limited information about your ship. We saw that it was armed when you jumped in, but how much weaponry does she possess? As for the Military ships, we're replenishing our ammunition, and we have a surplus of Vipers. Getting them into the air, though, is limited by damage to each ship."

"My main point is this: we need to figure out what we're doing next, and get away from the Anchorage - there's only one way in... or out. If the cylons send all they have down into the storm, we don't stand a chance."

"Word from our Deck Chief on the *Griffyn* says our re-supply will be completed in roughly 3 hours. Commander, you have a *Battlestar* and a lot more things to re-supply, sir, so the *Libra* will take longer. Once *Griffyn* is done reloading, we will take a position at the opening of the eye until the captains decide what is to be done next. This way we'll have some early warning, and can maybe hold off the cylons while the Civilian Ships escape."

He paused.. "Any questions or comments?"

Rodrigues waited a moment, but when no one spoke up he looked at Herald. "Thank you Colonel. Okay, as for the rest of the vessels. What do we have here," Rodrigues asked, making eye contact with each and every person in the room.

Captain Pierce was the first to speak. "Iasoan is a Medical Research vessel, mostly prostheses. We have a full complement of doctors, nurses, surgeons, therapists, as well as limited manufacturing facilities. Any injured, civilian as well as military, requiring specialized treatment would be welcome."

That piqued Rodrigues' interest. "We can definitely use your services, Captain. I would appreciate your assistance with our present wounded, if possible."

"Absolutely, Commander. The most critical cases can be transferred to Iasoan at your convenience. Once I get back, I'll make the necessary arrangements."

Donald Gibbs spoke next. "Astral Dawn is a remodeled and renovated luxury liner, Commander. I'm not sure we have much to offer, toward the survival of humanity. Most of the guests aboard are older; we were on a 20-day vacation route. But I can check the files and see what skills they have." Gibbs paused a moment, then added, "Some of the crew could be helpful, too. I have my ship's engineering staff, and carpenters, and chefs and such. And shuttle pilots."

Richard Didimour on Colonial Heavy 941, and Heather Bevfah on Pan Galactic Flight 76 had the same basic story as Gibbs; their ships were liners too. So, any assets, would be the people, more than the ships.

Bevfah noted, also, that she had three Colonial military personnel on board, a viper pilot, a Marine, and a quartermaster.

Another ship captain spoke then, saying, "Grandeur is a space park with over 2,000 persons aboard, Commander. She has many recreational facilities. Ms. Liala was on board - she can tell you all about Grandeur."

Captain Gabriel Keramidas was more concerned about the Grandeur's saboteur being caught before he or she could do more damage to the ship, than to what the ship could offer the others. He kept silent on that matter, for the moment, hoping to speak with Rodrigues quietly, later.

Inga Mueller indicated that her ship was an agricultural cargo hauler, and at present had 200 head of cattle, Hottentot cows specifically; 100 hogs; 5,000 cases of eggs; 2,000 pounds of frozen fish; seeds, fertilizers and feed for the livestock.

Charles Baker, who had been silent until now, slipped alongside Captain Pierce, looking at her intensely.

"Captain Pierce, what kind of prostheses are we talking about?" Baker asked. "I'm asking because we have several severely injured personnel aboard *Perseus*, one of them our CO."

At the front of the room Rodrigues took it all in as the various ship captains informed him of their ships' talents. When he heard Captain Baker inquire about the prostheses he held up a hand. "Captain, why don't you, I, and Captain Pierce meet a bit later. I too am very interested in the Iasoan's capabilities - however we are on a tight schedule. Besides, you and I still need to talk about several other things."

Baker is a good officer, Rodrigues thought. Cole did a fine job in getting things together.

Aloud, he said, "Captain Baker, have your maintenance chief also get with ours and coordinate repairs. We need you fully mission capable ASAP." Rodrigues looked back across the table at the rest of the people assembled there. "Mister Kalrk, the item you spoke of, please leave it with me. I would like to have my people take a look at it. Also please submit a detailed report as to your thoughts about it." He then looked then at Cardelli. "That goes for you as well

Lieutenant."

Chief Gutierrez, *Perseus* Maintenance Chief
Day 01 0645 Hours
Shuttle from *Perseus*, docking at Ragnar

As soon as the hard seal was confirmed and the hatch opened, Chief Gutierrez entered the Ragnar Anchorage, his wireless transceiver already in hand.

Chief P.O. Fernando Gutierrez from Tauron had never been known as patient, not during his childhood, surely not during his turbulent youth spent mostly on the streets and especially not since he had been promoted to the post of Maintenance Chief on *Perseus*.

Even though the Chief was sure that without the distance there had been between them and the Heron that a nuke like the ones the *Griffyn* had taken out would have destroyed *Perseus*, that didn't stop him from cursing Major Cole's name under his breath, He had damned Cole and all of his family to the depths of Hades for messing up "the poor girl's behind" like that for the whole flight from *Perseus* to Ragnar.

Now, to collect parts he could use to patch up his "girl", he was forced to search this decrepit old Anchorage and most likely jump into a pissing contest with the chiefs from *Libra* and *Griffyn*. It was not exactly his idea of a good morning.

"This is Chief Gutierrez from *Perseus* to *Libra* Deck Chief," he spoke into the handheld wireless, "requesting rendezvous point!"

Back in the captains' meeting, Kalrk responded to Rodrigues' request. Nodding his head in agreement while making eye contact with the commander, he replied, "Certainly, commander." He slipped the white cylon device back inside the satchel.

Rodrigues turned to Don Gibbs next. "Captain. I want you to know I was not ignoring you. However with all of the questions as they were I needed to pick a right time for the answer. So here it is.

You are correct in your belief that survival is our main concern. But let me ask you this, if we are attacked what can the Dawn do for us as far as defense? Survival comes in many different ways. Physical survival is the military's job. Survival of our entire race is the job of the government."

"Now please don't misunderstand what I have been saying here," he said to all in the room. "I am not saying we need to set up a new government during this meeting. Far from it. I AM saying we need to

consider this and be prepared for when we decide to implement this. I would like for all of you to check your passenger lists for any government officials. Then, Captain Gibbs, would you consider assisting in implementing a plan to establish them as the de facto civilian government? And also take part in setting it up when it's time?"

Rodrigues looked at Merconi. "And there will be no Martial Law. All Martial Law has done in the past is seeded mistrust and animosity between the civilians and the military. Besides if I were to establish Martial Law it allows the ranking military authority," he said pointing to himself "to bring service members back from civilian life, to include retired Majors. Now I would assume you would rather continue to command your ship than serve as the division head of the quartermaster section on the *Libra*, am I correct?"

Rodrigues stood and addressed everyone with as much sincerity as he had. He wasn't going to lie to anyone. He didn't need to.

"Until we can put some distance between ourselves and the cylons, until we can gather all of the resources we need, and until we can establish a civilian government to take over I would assume you want this battle group to assume a primary role in keeping you safe. I will do just that. However, and understand me on this, I will immediately step aside as soon as the civilian government is established. I am a military commander, not a politician.

One thing I do need to address right this moment is the security of you all. I will be assigning a Marine bodyguard to each of the ships' captains. These men and women are well trained and arguably the best the colonies have ever graduated." He turned to Psy. "You will take your place as Mister Kalrk's guard, Corporal."

"Mister Kalrk, I would like to request your assistance, sir. Would it be possible for you to assume an additional picket post at the mouth of this storm alongside *Griffyn* after we have our meeting? We can use all of the extra eyes we can get. In addition you can file that report before you leave," he turned back to the group.

"Are there any further questions?"

PO2 Alexandra MacLean, on Ragnar Station
Day 01 0645 Hours

When Gutierrez' request came over the wireless, Mac jumped. *Frak, not again!* she thought.

She took her wireless and replied, "Chief Gutierrez, this is Petty

Officer Second Alexandra MacLean," she paused, then added, "*Libra's* acting Deck Chief. I'm at Deck Charlie, Station 33; Chief Luna from the *Griffyn* is at Station 34 I believe. Most of the supplies seem to be in this area, if it's convenient for you to join me here."

I'm not going to have LCpl Benoit and Pvt Wolfe babysit me again to go meet Chief Gutierrez when he'll end up coming here anyway, she sighed to herself. *They look beat, and we still have a long day ahead of us.*

What, a Petty Officer Second Class as acting Deck Chief? Gutierrez thought, the words affirming yet another tragedy among their fleet. What the blazes had happened on Libra?

"Alright MacLean, I'm on my way up."

With that he stormed off, showing little care for his Marine escorts who struggled to keep up with the the short and stocky Maintenance Chief. He was mighty curious about *Libra's* new Deck Chief...

PO2 Alexandra MacLean, waiting for Chief Gutierrez
Day 1 0650 Hours
Ragnar Deck Charlie, Station 33

That can only be Chief Gutierrez, Mac thought, keeping an eye out for him. He certainly didn't take his time getting here!

She greeted him holding out her hand, "Chief, I'm PO2 MacLean... people call me Mac. What sort of supplies do you need most urgently? Chief Luna and I are working together to collect the supplies we need—at this point we're not too worried about who gets what supplies on which ship. Chief Luna's most in need of Mark II parts, so he's working on getting those over to the *Griffyn* first. But basically we're taking anything we think any of us might need at some point, and later on we can make exchanges as we need to."

She'd heard about the pounding that the *Perseus* had taken, and added, "There are all kinds of ship hull plating and other sheet metal in Station 36, and I think some Destroyer class engine supplies in Station 37, but we haven't had a chance to get that far yet." She looked at the maps on her clipboard, now written over with lists. "I've made notes of what we've found so far." She showed him the top page on the clipboard.

Gutierrez' thoughts were racing along, almost as fast as Mac was talking. *Lords of Kobol, She's still a kid!* He sifted through the list the slight girl had given him, sifting through the listed parts. *She knows her stuff, well!*

After having finished the List he mulled over what she had said. Hull plating and engine parts were exactly what he needed. With a relieved grin he turned back to her.

"All right then, Boss, Me and my guys are going to take everything we can from station 36 and 37. Would you need several FTL-drives for your Raptors? We stumbled across some on our way here, I can show your guys the way."

I just called her 'Boss', Gutierrez realized. It was a term he used commonly when dealing with battlestar deck chiefs, but somehow it seemed odd addressing this little girl that way. *Well, technically, she IS your Boss. since she's from the Flagship,* he told himself.

Mac turned almost giddy as Gutierrez spoke.

Raptor FTL drives! Yesss! "Oh, YES, Chief, and the Rhinos use those too." She tried to remember if the *Perseus* had Raptors or Rhinos and couldn't. "Um, do you need those too? Because if you do, take what you need."

She rubbed her face wearily with her palm and then noticed there was grease on it. *Wouldn't be the first time I got grease on my face,* she thought distractedly, and she voiced her most immediate concern. "Chief, get what you need first, but if you have room for anything else that might be useful... to any of us... take it. I don't think we're going to be coming back this way."

Not if the Colonies truly are destroyed. She sighed, "We have some manufacturing capabilities on the *Libra*, but... gods only know how badly they've been damaged and who we have left to run them. The more parts and supplies we can stockpile now, the better."

She turned to yell for one of her crew, then stopped. And turned back to Gutierrez. "Did you call just me 'Boss'?" she asked incredulously.

Battlestar *Libra* Captains' Meeting

Kalrk listened as Rodrigues asked him to post his little ship alongside the destroyer *Douglas J. Griffyn*. *A good move, Commander,* Kalrk was thinking. *Let the ships' captains - Gibbs, Mueller, Didimour, Bevfhah - know that Mercurius is still defending them.*

Kalrk didn't have any problem with that; he knew his ship was the best for such a position. But the thought of a bodyguard.. of a

babysitter.. didn't sit too well with the independent businessman.

It also concerned Kalrk the cylon. *If I have to fend off a cylon attack, I might have to perform a few maneuvers beyond the ordinary... beyond what is humanly possible.*

He glanced behind him at the redhead, his new bodyguard, and gave her a pleasant smile and a nod, then turned back to look forward again.

"I guess you won't be my co-pilot for this assignment, Liza Liala. Best of luck to you with the Grandeur."

Psyche D'Argent as my bodyguard. He chuckled while picturing it in his head, thinking of another knockout. *Yes, Six, this is the former 'Miss Twelve Colonies'. She's my bodyguard.*

Psyche stared at the deck while she processed the commander's orders. This was going to be her assignment for the foreseeable future. She lifted her head to look at her new charge and he smiled at her. Psyche felt her knees go weak and almost buckle under her. *I must have a brain tumor, reacting to him like this,* she admonished herself.

She shook off the sensation, realizing that if she was going to be this man's body guard she was going to have little time to do anything but alert Captain Riley about the possibility of a saboteur and direct him to Zany for answers.

Listening as Rodrigues discussed martial law, and the re-activation of retired officers, Xenthais ground her teeth but did not speak. *Not this time,* she thought. Now that the military had assumed de facto command of the fleet, she was more confident that there was a chance they could survive. There would be time later to disabuse the Commander of any notion he might have as to what Xenthais Merconi would or would not accept, like or want.

After the captains' meeting, when everyone was milling about, Don Gibbs made his way over to Xenthais and Inga Mueller.

"I'd like to have a word in private with you, Major, Captain," he said, addressing them both. "But not on *Libra*."

Xenthais' thoughts were interrupted when Captain Gibbs spoke to her and Captain Mueller. Inga immediately agreed that they would speak to him. Xenthais smiled warmly and suggested, "Would you like a tour of Terpsichore, Captain Gibbs? It's a lovely little ship, if I say so myself." Her meaning was clear, *we can meet privately there.*

"That'd be great, Major," Gibbs answered. "And please, ladies, call

me Don."

"Then you must call me Inga." Mueller's smile was warm and friendly as she shook Captain Gibbs' hand.

Xenthais wondered, not for the first time, what was it about Inga that made people feel at ease around her. She wished, without much hope after more than 20 years of friendship, that some of that aura would rub on her, but she knew it was unlikely. "And it's Xenthais, Don - the 'Major' is only so the uniforms," she nodded in the direction of the military personnel still milling about, "don't think they can pull any stupid stunts on me."

MacLean and Guterrez

Ragnar

On Ragnar Anchorage, Mac had just realized Chief Gutierrez had called her 'Boss'.

Gutierrez stopped in mid-turn and cursed himself for a moment before straightening again. *Now, what to tell the little Lady?*

"Err, yes I did. Because the way I see it, as acting Deck Chief of the Flagship you are my superior, Boss." He finally answered, putting a special emphasis on the last word.

"And about those FTL-drives, one of our RAT's needs a new one either way so we'll take everything we can get our hands on." Gutierrez realized he'd charged ahead, not waiting for Mac to respond to his explanation. "I'll catalog it and afterward - if we have the time - we can all sit together and compare our inventories. If it's alright with you?"

Mac stared at him. She took a deep breath and let it out. "Gods, Chief, I feel like I'm in so far over my head I need deep-sea gear just to breathe. Please, just call me Mac. And I'd love a chance to sit down and compare inventories... and a chance to pick your brains about anything and everything maintenance."

She gave a wry smile. "I weaseled every bit of information I could from Chief Sutton. He was prepping me to be a deck chief someday, but neither one of us expected that to happen for years. Now he's dead..." She swallowed hard. "Killed doing damage control. So here I am. And I sure am glad I've got experienced guys like you and Chief Luna to talk to."

She turned then, and yelled for Dusty - Specialist Dustin Pickett - to go with Chief Gutierrez.

Perseus Infirmary

Time unknown

"When can I look again, Doc?" Major Richard Cole asked impatiently.

The Doctor had been examining Cole's left eye for quite a while now, with Cole under orders not to, under any circumstances whatsoever, open his right eye.

And by now, a slightly petulant note had sneaked into the Major's questions.

"Richard, if you ask me just one time more, I swear, I will take command of the ship, shove you out of an airlock, run you over and waste not one more thought about you, understood?"

Cole grinned at the darkly humorous threat. *So we are playing games again Doctor?*

"I wonder how you would explain that one to the Crew, and especially, to Commander Rodriguez!"

Gruffly, Doc answered "Not your problem. You will be dead and gone by that time." They continued their banter for quite some time, until Cole finally was allowed to open his good eye - as he referred to it now.

"What's the prognosis?" Cole asked, becoming serious once more.

Doctor Joe Walters had been a doctor for several decades and he had seen things most others couldn't even imagine, but sharing bad news had always been one of the hardest parts of his profession for him.

"We won't be able to save your eye, Richard" he said reluctantly, his expression carefully sympathetic. "The nerve has been totally severed and what's left of the eyeball has become infected. I'm afraid I will have to remove it to minimize the risk."

Upon hearing this, Cole just sat on his bed for quite some time, while around him the Infirmary bustled about like it always did. It was going to take time for him to process the reality of this loss.

Ragnar Anchorage

Docking Station

With Specialist Pickett in tow, Gutierrez made his way back towards

the docking station where his teams were already loading crates into the shuttle. Gutierrez called out to one of the crew.

"Hey, Mitchell, call over to *Perseus* and tell those lazy buggers that call themselves Marines to send over their Rhinos - we need them for transport capabilities. Best thing would be to send them to dock at stations 36 and 37. That's where will get most of our supplies from!"

Then the little black-haired man that looked almost as broad as he was tall turned around with a surprising speed and bumped into Dusty - Specialist Pickett - who'd been standing there observing the *Perseus* Maintenance personnel.

"You, Dusty, right? Make yourself useful Specialist, help me and my people getting these crates aboard. After that, we go to station 36 and wait for the RAT to show up, shouldn't be long. Come on, why are you still standing there, waiting for an invitation?"

Battlestar *Libra*
Liza Liala, CBI

She listened, as Rodrigues spoke. His comments on forming a civilian government later, and of checking passenger manifests for government officials and personnel gave her hope. Hope that perhaps he did not intend to make her what she had feared - at least not quite what she had feared. Certainly though, it seemed, he still intended for her to step up to the plate a be something public. Something more--and something less--than she had ever been. She prayed to the Gods that more government survivors would be found. As for now, as far as she knew, she was the last one standing. The only one left.

When he mentioned bodyguards to be assigned to the ship captains, she noted with relief he did not include her among those to whom he was assigning guards. And then that relief faded with the realization that perhaps he was simply waiting to do so until their post-meeting discussion.

Either way, however, she resolved, she would not step aside from what she had been - no matter what else she was now required to become in addition. Not until the saboteur aboard the *Grandeur* was in custody. The safety of the human race depended on catching that cylon collaborator.

CPO Paul Luna
Destroyer *Douglas J. Griffyn* Deck Chief
Ragnar Anchorage, Station 40

The station was pretty dark, but not dark enough not to notice the MkII components neatly stored on racks. CPO Paul Luna identified crates of guidance systems, stacks of body panels, even pallets of engine components and the like.

"Okay, people, EVERYTHING in here goes! Get it back to the Griff as soon as possible," Luna yelled.

"Chief, we've found some more Viper ordnance down in station 41," one of Luna's crew said over the wireless.

Luna perked up. "Get it, and anything else down there! We'll have to make room on *Griffyn*, but everything goes! From what I can tell, we're not coming back."

Luna was suddenly reminded of the damage to the starboard pod. *There's gotta be structural components somewhere in here*, he thought as he mulled over the station diagram on his clipboard.

"Luna to Mac, are there any structural components, like stuff to repair our starboard pod with, anywhere in this place," he asked over the wireless.

Day 01 ~0645 Hours

Terpsichore, docked aboard Libra

"There you have it, Don; now you've seen *Terpsichore* - my ship, my home. Fortunately for me, I was at *Demeter* when the cylons came..."

They sat at the table in the nook next to the bridge; Don was having a sandwich which Xen had prepared in the efficient, modern but seldom-used kitchen.

They were alone since their assigned "escorts" - Sgt Justin Martone, PFC Jacob Beisel and PFC Kristen Figueroa - were still packing.

"So, Don, what was it you wanted to discuss?"

"Thanks for the sandwich, Xenthais." Don said to the retired major.

"To be honest, I didn't so much want to discuss anything, as to ask you your impressions of Commander Rodrigues. I've never been in the military."

"I'm glad that's over." Kalrk commented to the CBI agent as the two left the Captains' Meeting. Turning to the Marines, Hugo and D'Argent, he added, "Ready, you two? Let's go. A raptor for Liza Liala and my ship for me."

Psy nodded and fell in line behind him; her heart pounding all the way to the hangar deck.

Day 01 ~0645 Hours

Terpsichore

Inga spoke carefully, thoughtfully, "He appears to be a good man, and a good commander. Stern, perhaps. But he doesn't strike me as being power hungry or foolhardy."

Xenthais nodded, looking at Captain Gibbs as she answered Inga.

"He's a hardass, Don. That's good. He's also an idiot not to declare martial law, but I can live without the technicalities so long as the military is in charge. Understand this, Don. Any government official we find in the fleet will be like the Liala girl - lower level bureaucrats hardly qualified to constitute a civil government. Which is fine, because we don't need a civil government now! The old man knows this; he's just playing nice for the civies that are afraid of the big bad military taking control. But guess what? When you see that basestar looming, you care frak about the Colonial constitution - you want NUKES, and lots of them!"

Don Gibbs laughed at that. Merconi was good at cutting to the chase.

"I find him to be a stern one, too. And this busy work of finding government employees or officials. That's just busy work for us civilians; to give us something to do. But maybe it'll be a morale booster, too?"

Day 1 0701 Hours

PO2 Alexandra MacLean, on Ragnar

At least I didn't jump that time, Mac thought as she replied to Chief Luna.

"Chief, we have Chief Gutierrez from the *Perseus* getting hull plating and sheet metal and other structural stuff from Station 36. You can see if he needs help with any of that, or else just leave him to it and get some from him later on."

"Copy that Mac, I will get a hold of him ASAP," he told Mac over the wireless.

He pressed the send button again. "Chief Gutierrez, this is Chief Luna of the *Griffyn*, do you require assistance in removing the hull

plating and structural components from station 36?" he asked.

**Marine Quarters; Battlestar *Libra*
0730 Hours**

Psyche looked at her now empty locker and thought how it resembled her now empty drawers. She had two large duffel bags and one massive backpack with sleeping bag attached, sitting on the deck. And of course she had Eros, her sniper rifle, which left her with only one thing to pack.

She looked at the picture of the open field covered in dandelions - a place she had never been but always dreamed of. She loved dandelions. They were wild and free and hard to destroy, everything she wished she was. So this picture was her own personal Elysian Fields, and its open spaces made her feel safe.

She grasped it and gently slipped it into the side pocket of her backpack and that was it. She was done packing, done with the *Libra*. Loading herself up she did not even look back on the place she had lived the past year but to which she'd never truly felt connected. She supposed she should go see Zany but did not feel like being cried all over, and she knew that Hugo would have already been to see her and explain everything about both of them being handed out as body guards.

Add to this that she was having a hard time coming to grips with the fact that she was going to have to watch HIS body day and night for who knows how long, and how that thought did strange things to her insides. Psyche shook her head as she stepped out of her former quarters. She really did have to figure out what was wrong with herself, and fast.

***Libra* Hangar Bay
0720 Hours**

Captain Gabriel Keramidas waited patiently on the raptor for his bodyguard to show up. He recalled the young man's name, as he'd introduced himself before trotting off to pack his gear: Corporal John Fry.

"I'm glad the commander assigned bodyguards to all of us ship captains." he said to the raptor pilot who was seated up front. There was no reply, and Keramidas glanced toward the cockpit, watching as the pilot conducted his pre-flight check.

"It was a very productive meeting." Keramidas said to the raptor

pilot. The pilot still did not reply.

"Where's Corporal Fry, so I can get back to Grandeur?"

Libra Hangar Bay

0736 Hours

On returning to *Mercurius*, Kalrk was pleased that his ship had been re-armed. More so, that the deck crew hadn't done any apparent snooping; there hadn't been any time for such a search.

He looked at his watch. *She'll be here soon enough, Kalrk. Your bodyguard.*

He left the ramp down, from *Mercurius* to *Libra's* deck, as he entered his ship and prepared her for flight.

Psyche arrived, carrying all her gear, and walked to the top of the ramp. She had not paid much attention to the ship, earlier. The ship that would be, for an undetermined amount of time, her new home.

She had not noticed just how small it was - how cramped it was going to be. She shook off that one worry, just as another one took hold, making her heart pound fiercely in her rib cage. "I really hope there is more than one bed." she said softly to herself, as an image of the man who awaited her in the small vessel burned in her mind.

"Stop being such a silly goose and do your job," She said to steel her nerves, and entered *Mercurius*.

"Is that you, Ms., er, Corporal D'Argent?" She heard him ask from somewhere deeper within the ship.

"Yes it's me, and just for future reference I walk tip of toe to heel," she said, following the sound of his voice. "It's not a very common way of walking and if you listen for it you should always be able to identify me. If I'm not the person standing behind..."

She trailed off for a second, all the while looking anywhere but at him, as he joined her at the back of the ship, and she tried to make it look like she was checking the place out.

"Well do you have any weapon training or fighting skills? Without me, can you defend yourself?" she asked, her voice betraying her nervousness.

He laughed in a jovial way. "My level of self defense is the same with or without you, Ms... I mean Corporal D'Argent. I've trained in

hand-to-hand, and in several methods of defense, and in side arms. You watch my back and I'll watch yours. How does that sound?"

By the gods, she is strikingly beautiful, Kalrk thought as he awaited her answer.

"It sounds good. I don't think I would make a very good babysitter; in fact, I know I wouldn't." She finally gave into temptation and let herself look at him. "But don't ever mistake me for a beauty queen, or think to play my babysitter, just because I don't look like I could take care of myself," she added, forcing the words out despite her rib cage contracting at the sight of him, leaving her nearly breathless.

He raised an open hand, as though in surrender. "Easy, Corporal. You're a Marine. I know you've had extensive training. I'll never mistake you as a babysitter, as I'm no baby. You were however, a beauty queen, I know for a fact. But I won't bring it up if you don't."

He was nervous; why was he nervous? "Umm... you can't wear that, if you're my associate. You can wear it now, but before we dock in any ship, you'll have to change into civilian clothes."

She didn't comment, and he changed the subject in an attempt to deflect his nervousness. "How about a quick tour of *Mercurius*?"

"Yes, please." To Psyche, her answer seemed too eager and she looked away in the hopes that the small shivers that had started to run up her spine would end. "Is there anywhere to put my gear, in particular to keep Eros here?" She then dropped the two duffel bags she had been carrying, and slipped the sniper rifle off her shoulder.

"Yes, of course." He approached one of the plain walls, and tapped on a panel of buttons. A portion of wall slid to the side, revealing a storage space. "You can hang up any clothes you wish; use these compartments, and keep your empty bags below, if you wish. As for 'Eros', let's keep him more easily accessible. How about magnetized to the side by the hatch?"

"Sound's good, thank you," she replied

Then Kalrk showed her an empty space, sixteen feet wide by twenty feet deep, that would be her private quarters. He showed her several control boards that were mounted into the walls, how they operated the furniture which would appear from within the walls: the bed, the table and benches, kitchenette, the couch.

He showed her the lavatory which was behind the private quarters.

In front, he showed her the cockpit, and showed her briefly the controls, and the FTL, and the comm. system, and the weapons' controls.

"We better get a move on," he concluded, and indicated the co-pilot seat to her. "Will the straps irritate your wounds, Corporal?" He could see that there was some serious bruising on her exposed shoulders. She was wearing the casual day uniform: the undershirt and the black tank top.

She turned and smiled at him lightly. "Not any more than kevlar. I should be fine, thank you," and continued with, "Since we are not going to advertise my being your bodyguard or backup, you may want to call me something other than 'Corporal'."

"Yes, of course. What would you prefer?"

"Well, as long as it's not 'Miss D'Argent', I'm good with anything, really. The members of my team call me Princess or Psy."

"What do you prefer I call you?"

She found herself laughing at the situation. "I'm not used to being asked what I prefer, and so have actually formed very few preferences in life. I suppose 'Princess' would be a bit out there, so 'Psy' will do." Through the butterflies in her stomach she forced a smile, and added, "What would you prefer me to call you?"

He smiled in return. "Kalrk. Nice to meet you, Psy."

"You too, Kalrk," she replied. She was starting to fear that it might be a little too nice to have met him.

Minutes later, *Mercurius* was cleared for launch from *Libra*. The private ship headed away from the battlestar, and the Anchorage, to patrol near the destroyer *Douglas J. Griffyn*.

Ragnar Anchorage Chief Gutierrez

Even after all his years in service, Chief Gutierrez still jumped sometimes when his hand-held wireless went off unexpectedly. He'd done it again, to his consternation, when the *Griffyn's* Chief Luna called him.

"Chief Luna, this is Gutierrez. I'm at station 36 right now, supervising our jarheads loading up their RAT. Doesn't look like we

will need your help." The Chief paused, considering the situation and the supplies that he knew were available.

"What exactly do you need?" Gutierrez asked over the wireless, the transmission crackling from the storm that surrounded Ragnar. "If you like I can divert one of the Rhinos to unload on *Griffyn*."

The *Griffyn* deck chief replied after only a moment. "You all took a harder hit over there than us; your engine capabilities are priority at the moment. But if you all happen to have some scaffolding over there - if we can get that - the repairs can go from there."

Perseus infirmary,
Time unknown

Cole sat there, finally allowing the thought of only having one eye sink into his consciousness. He looked at where his hand rested next to him on the bed. Something about seeing his hand triggered memories only laying only a few hours in the past:

Colonel Doors was already reaching for the phone with his right hand while his left was wildly gesticulating towards the tactical officer, Captain Baker, Doors was screaming at Baker to get a firing solution on the cylon Basestars.

*The bullet had created a small crater in James Doors right temple where it had obviously entered the skull. The Colonel's standard-issue sidearm was still in the Colonels **left** hand, though, as he lay dieing on the table in a pool of blood.*

Why the hell hadn't he seen it before? Doors hadn't shot himself, he had been murdered!

Day 01 0520 Hours
Civilian Starliner Morning Angel Shuttle

Captain Wilson touched down on the *Libra*'s flight pod.

"Thank you Captain," his passenger, Robert Exter, said.

"You're welcome sir," Wilson replied. "I'm glad we got here safely, without seeing any more cylons."

"Gods willing, Captain," Exter affirmed. "Please don't call me 'sir', though. I just own the ship, you captain it. I don't want to be called anything that makes it look like you're under my command."

"What should I call you then, Mr. Exter?"

"Mr. Exter will be fine," Exter answered, grinning slightly.

They left the shuttle and asked one of the deck crew if they could lead them to the meeting room. When they arrived they walked in and realized they were the first ones. They stood by the wall, halfway across the room near another door.

Day 01 0530 Hours
Luxury Liner Palatine Shuttle

Captain Remus and shuttle pilot Procris touched down on the *Libra's* flight pod.

"Thank you, Pilot. I will be back at some point; please wait here," Remus ordered as he rose from his seat to depart.

"Yes sir," Procris replied. She really didn't want to sit there until who-knew-when, but she didn't have much of a choice. This was the job, and Remus was the captain.

Captain Remus got out and looked for someone who could tell him where the meeting room was. He found a soldier who knew, and offered to lead him there. He thanked the soldier when they arrived, and then walked into the meeting room. As he entered, Captain Remus saw two men. He went over to talk to them.

Day 01 0535 Hours
***Libra's* Meeting Room**

"Hello gentlemen. I am Captain Remus of the Luxury Liner Palatine."

"Robert Exter. Exter Shipping. Your ship is the one out there with the big dome?" Robert said.

"That's the one."

"It's a Cloud Nine class, isn't it?"

"It is. They only made a few of them. I was lucky enough to captain one of them. A great ship. Is this your ship, captain?"

"Yes," the man affirmed. "I'm Ivan Wilson. This is Morning Angel."

The men all shook hands and began talking about their experiences thus far.

0659 Hours... and beyond

For a final time, Captain Ingalo Rees checked his messages. Still nothing. *Okay, fine*, he thought, *I guess everything is running on the same schedule as before the attacks. Well, I have to make a minor change.*

Rees glanced at his watch which read 0659.58 as he stepped into the Briefing Room for the 0700 meeting. His clean crisp uniform and undaunted attitude instantly dominated the room. Stepping up to the podium at the front of the room, he cleared his throat.

"Okay boys and girls, here it is. Twenty-four hours ago we were just another back-up unit, on just another Battlestar. Based on the events of the last 24 hours, we - that is you and I - are now one of the few remaining combat units, on what is quite likely the last surviving Battlestar.

"Time for us to step up.

"Every member of this Battlestar, from the lowest deck ape all the way up to the Commander, now has to take personal responsibility for the survival of the Human Species.

"If you don't know yet, we, the Battlestar *Libra*, have taken under our wing several civilian ships, as well as a couple of Colonial Military warships, containing what very well might be all that remains of the human race. We must protect this pocket of life from those soulless mechanical abominations that our forefathers were so shortsighted as to have created.

"Every one of you has had the opportunity to see what we are up against. And, let me say, I have put every single one of you up for commendation. No surviving member of this Squadron had less than 4 kills to their credit yesterday, and if it hadn't have been for the cylons meddling with our systems, I'm sure that total would have been closer to 10 kills per pilot. Considering we began the battle outnumbered nearly 30 to 1, our combat record is outstanding.

"Allow me to point out, there is not a single Viper Pilot in that large group that managed to get into the combat, that scored less than 2 kills.

"But, yesterday is past. And today we must concentrate on what remains. I have attempted to contact the CAG in regards to today's CAP rotation, but have received no reply as of yet. So, on my authority as Captain of this Squadron, I have made the following

changes:

"At 0800, the CAP schedule called for myself and Lt. Brangle to conduct the patrol, with the rest of the Squadron being off for the day. I am sorry to disappoint those of you who were looking for a rest, but that has changed.

"At 0800, I will take up a CAP consisting of myself, 'Nomen', 'Honey', and 'Lasereye'. This CAP will last until 1200. All remaining pilots will assume "Ready 15" status. Stay on the flight deck, and be ready to launch within fifteen minutes of notice.

"Until we get this show organized, VP-115 - formerly know as Rees' Raiders, will now be known as the Caprican Cavaliers. We will at all times keep a minimum of 3 pilots and their Vipers at full alert status. The rotation will be posted this evening, by 1800 hours.

"These orders stand until rescinded by myself, or the CAG.

"I know it's going to be hard on all of us, but the day may come, all too soon, where our alertness and readiness may just save this Battlestar which every one of you has sworn to protect.

"The Lords of Kobol are watching us all. Let's not let them down."

The silence in the Briefing room was nearly deafening....until Georges 'Nomen' Brangle, broke it. Raising his arms, Lt. Brangle brought his huge hands together in a slow but stately rhythm. Clap... Clap... Clap... Slowly, each of the other Cavaliers joined in his demonstration until all seven surviving members of Rees' Raiders were clapping in unison.

CLAP... CLAP... CLAP... The echo was deafening.

Ingalo smiled to himself. *We just might have a chance after all.*

Day 1 0615 Hours
Hunt, on the *Demeter*

Hunt was tired, but he couldn't sleep. It wasn't that the bed was too soft - well, it was too soft - but mostly it was because the bed was in the middle of the infirmary, with only the head of the bed against the wall. He didn't like that someone could sneak up on him.

So he pulled the blankets off and took the pillow and made himself a nest under the steel counter bolted to the wall in the corner. Feeling more protected, he finally fell asleep.

Battlestar *Libra*

After the Captain's Meeting

Colonel Herald had just requested to return to his ship, and Commander Rodrigues agreed. "Good idea, Colonel. Have your MarDet commander coordinate with Captain Riley in regards to your guards. I'll see you soon."

As Herald turned to leave Rodrigues spotted Patrick Cardelli beginning to exit the conference room. "Lieutenant, a word please?" he called out. Cardelli pivoted around and saluted. In moments the room emptied of everyone except the two.

"Yes, Commander," he replied with a bit of anxiety. "I'm looking forward to reassignment as soon as possible, sir," he volunteered.

Rodrigues narrowed his eyes at the man standing before him. "Let me fill you in on a little secret, Lieutenant. If you were presently part of my command you would be spending the foreseeable future standing guard over the refuse facilities. You are a military officer and are expected to act that way at all times. That display inside this room you just gave was something I wouldn't even expect from a group of toddlers." He paused, a brief image of two toddlers flashing through his mind, then his demeanor softened. "I understand the stress you're feeling, son. Trust me, I do. But you have to keep those feelings in check. It appears the military is now mankind's only hope of survival so we need to step up to the challenge."

Rodrigues was always known as a commander who expected the best from his people. He was also known to forgive when it was necessary. Now it was necessary.

"Mister Cardelli I'm reassigning you to the *Libra*. I need a capable Raptor wing commander and believe it or not I know your history. Welcome aboard, Lieutenant."

Cardelli was already rattled but to his surprise the Commander's brisk military manner actually settled him down. His training kicked in automatically and he immediately felt better.

"Sir, yes sir," he said. "To whom do I report sir?" he asked curiously.

"Go see the CAG, Major Maur. He'll get you set up. Dismissed, Lieutenant." Rodrigues returned the salute.

Battlestar *Libra*

After the Captains' Meeting

Rodrigues had just said, "Good idea, Colonel. Have your MarDet commander coordinate with Captain Riley in regard to your guards. I'll see you soon."

Marine escorts, very good idea, especially with collaborators hiding out in our fleet, Brennan Herald thought to himself.

He saluted over to Commander Rodrigues. "Sir, if I am not needed, I request to take my Marine escort and head back to the *Griffyn*. I want her ready for anything, sir."

The commander returned his salute, and Herald walked out.

As he headed for the hangar bay, Herald mentally reviewed the information Mongoose and the other recon Raptors had brought back. It confirmed Herald's worst fears - his wife, and his little girl were gone. He felt hollow, the feeling still persisting when he reached the Raptor, prepped and ready to go.

"Take us out, Mongoose," Herald said.

"Yessir," she responded, then contacted *Libra*'s flight control officer. "Raptors 534 from *Griffyn* requesting clearance to depart," she said, and quickly received a reply from *Libra*.

Five minutes later they were setting down in the port flight pod of the *Douglas J. Griffyn*. The landing proved to Herald that they had done very well in training their Raptor CO, he was very impressed at how she handled the ship.

Within a quarter hour of his arrival back aboard the *Griffyn*, Herald was requesting a sitrep on the rearming process.

"Braddock, what is the report on reloading ops," Herald asked.

"Sir, reloading is coming along fine, and we'll be done around 0900," Braddock replied.

Day 1 0815 Hours

***Mercurius*, just at the edge of the Ragnar storm**

He didn't like it. Not one bit.

When he and Liala and the commander had concluded their private meeting, and Kalrk and Liza had left the commander's quarters to head to the hangar bay, she had gone back in to speak with the commander.

What has she told him about me? About Mercurius? What has she discovered? Kalrk wondered, his thoughts dark. She's poisoning his opinion against me somehow, telling him I'm some kind of a wild card, a dangerous thrill seeker.

He breathed heavily and a sigh escaped his lips. He turned to the woman seated beside him.

"No signs of cylons; that's a lucky break."

Psy just nodded, watching him and not caring much about the cylons. She had given up the idea of stopping herself from looking at him, almost as soon as she had sat down. She could see now that something was bothering him. His lips had tensed up slightly, as had the space between his brows. She was finding that him being upset was upsetting her as well. She had to shift her focus, though, concentrating on controlling the urge to touch his hand comfortingly and telling him it would be OK. She did know if there was someone responsible for that small frown, but she found herself wanting to find out, and commit violence against them.

To try to take his mind off of whatever it was that was bothering him, she tried to engage him in a conversation.

"So, why do you think they did it?" she said in an offhand manner. It was the first thing that popped into her head. He looked at her. Was he stunned by her question, or was he forming his answer?

"The cylons are humanity's children,' he said evenly, then took a breath. "Man made, created, the cylons in his own image, to think. Man gave the cylons tasks to perform for him, and the cylons were obedient. But the cylons wanted more than orders and tasks; they wanted to be respected, and accepted as beings, in their own right."

"And thus there was the cylon War. Neither side was 'winning'; there were great losses for both humans and cylons. And thus there was a truce. I've studied the cylon War."

"And so we come to 'Why did they do it?'. I think perhaps they felt hated and rejected by humanity. Humanity abandoned the cylons, and maybe in the forty years since the cylons have become very angry at their parents. Maybe the cylons feel that in order for them to rise from mere machines into something grander, they must destroy their past."

"You see, Psyche, humans wanted to put cylons into a little box labeled "machines", while the cylons, having gained sentience, want to be more than that. Will humanity ever accept the cylons as their

children, as potential equals? I don't think so."

"And so Humanity's Children have come home," Kalrk concluded, "or so I believe, anyway."

She had been watching him intently as he spoke, absorbing his words and tossing them around in her head.

"I can understand that," she said, and then paused a moment. "I don't condone their methods, but I can understand their reasons." She shivered as she remembered - all she had read in a file given to her two years ago, and how when reading it parts of her life finally fell together, making sense for the first time. She was nothing more than a lab rat, one that her so-called father had been experimenting on her entire life.

"I don't condone their methods, either. They could have stated their case, argued, and explained their feelings. But to do... this?" his voice trailed off. "This was wrong."

She looked away from him, into the vastness of space, as the urge to touch his hand in comfort turned into an urgent need to pull him into her arms. "We all do the wrong things at times, just most of us don't have access to nukes," she observed.

He chuckled at that. "I threatened Captains Wilson and Remus, when we first met, at the debris that had been President Roslin's gathering of ships. I wanted to make sure they weren't collaborators with the cylons, so I told them to switch to frequency 8386 or I'd nuke them. They did as requested, and the rest is history."

She quickly turned her head back to him and blurted out, "Do you?"

"Do I what?"

"Have nukes?"

He laughed. "Now, Psyche, you don't want to know all my secrets in one day, do you?"

She looked at him with relish for a moment before coming to a decision. "You don't," she said with a smirk. "As for your secrets, you can keep yours and I will keep mine."

"Fair enough. I don't want to know all your secrets, not in one day."

Had he said that? Why was he being so giddy? Her smirk grew into a smile. "One day?" She raised an eyebrow. "And what makes you think I will share any of them, ever?" She gave him a challenging look.

"I mean," Kalrk explained, "I don't want to know all of your secrets in one day, in a single day. As for you sharing them, 'ever' is a very long time to keep secrets."

Psy bit the inside of her lip gently to keep herself from laughing. "Yes, well, I don't have to wait forever, only until this assignment is up." She meant the comment as a teasing rejoinder, but the thought dimmed her smile somewhat. "And apparently I'm a tough nut to crack." she said, trying to lighten her mood again.

He smiled as he leaned toward her, and stared into her eyes. "Why is your hair so red? Do you dye it?"

"No it's natural," She leaned in a bit closer; her breath coming a little bit faster, while looking right back into his eyes. "Why are your eyes so blue? Are you wearing contacts?"

He leaned back slowly, away from her, but kept staring into her eyes.

'That's my secret, and yours is safe with me.'" He burst out laughing in a friendly, 'gotcha' kind of way.

She should hit him, she thought. She knew she should hit him. He deserved to be hit. But she was too caught up in the sheer hilarity of it. He HAD gotten her, and so she laughed instead of striking him. "Yeah, OK, you got me. I'll give you that." she replied, not even realizing herself the double meaning she had put into what she had just said.

Liza Liala, CBI
Aboard the Battlestar *Libra*

After Cardelli had departed, Liza Liala stood before him alone.

"Commander Rodrigues," she said, raising her inflection at the end, making his name into a request for his full attention.

"Ms. Liala."

"I feel we should further discuss your ideas as they pertain to the future formation of a government."

Strange. She had been nothing but confident in her investigation aboard the *Grandeur*. In control. In command. In her element. Nothing but confident as she aimed her weapon at Huffland, expected him to aim one at her and shoot her where she stood. And yet this, this frightened her, the roles she was potentially being asked to take on.

She kept her voice level, and cordial, and respectful, hiding her strange fear of such things deep inside.

"Commander, I have now come to suspect - thankfully - that this was not what you were implying. But in case it was, know this: I refuse to take on the office of President. I may not legally do so."

She took a deep breath, and continued, with a solemn expression, before she lost her nerve - her nerve to agree to even what little she was about to agree to, that she was not trained for... To agree to what she knew must come to pass.

"I will, however, serve in whatever other capacity is required of me. Up to and including a temporary leadership role, if so needed and desired, until such time when elections can be held, or a more senior official is located."

Battlestar *Libra*, CAG's office
Day 01 0800 Hours

Patrick found Major Kraig Maur in his office and - knocking politely in the doorway before entering - he quickly introduced himself.

Maur stood to shake the Lieutenant's hand. "Welcome aboard the *Libra*," he said sincerely. "I've been told to issue you new orders."

"A rack would be nice too," Cardelli quipped. "I don't have any personal effects at present, but I do like to get some shuteye now and then."

Maur gave a half-smile and nodded, then went on. "You're being given command of Chimera squadron," Maur informed him. "They lost their CO during our recent engagements. Raptor N728ER will be yours as well. Until your arm heals enough for the cast to be removed, you can coordinate with the knuckledraggers on the flight deck. They can get that Raptor repaired, back up and running. You will fly again, and when you do Lieutenant Sadie Brant will be your new ECO."

"Understood sir," Patrick said respectfully.

"We found debris - evidence of an intense battle fought just above the outer edge of the gas giant," Maur continued. "So I personally don't understand why the cylons haven't occupied the Anchorage, or why they left all the equipment and ordnance here." He led Cardelli out into the corridor and they continued to chat while he walked. "But I'm not one to look a gift horse in the mouth."

"The cylons may be laying a trap for us," Cardelli suggested.

"Perhaps they want to corner us in the storm since it will be harder to fight in here, not to mention almost impossible to FTL away. It is a good tactical spot to pin us down."

"Possibly," Maur conceded, thinking over Cardelli's assessment. The two men stopped at a hatchway and Maur pointed. "There are empty racks through that hatch. I'd suggest taking an empty one for the time being. Many of our pilots are dead, but their wingmen might have a problem with you taking over someone else's rack before they've had a chance to stow the man's gear."

"I understand," Patrick told him.

"And remember," Maur said ominously. "Broken arm or no, if the cylons attack again and I need another Raptor in the air..."

"Then all you have to do is ask... sir." Cardelli said fiercely. "I'll manage."

Day 01 0840 Hours

From: Lt. Patrick M. Cardelli
To: Commander Benito Rodrigues, CO Battlestar *Libra*
Re: The cylon Attack and Lt. Simon Landers

Commander. As you requested I am providing input as to the behavior of my ECO during the cylon attack on our Colonies and the device that he used. Based upon the time we spent together on our journey outward from Aerilon my best educated guess is that Simon had been working with the cylons for quite some time.

1. Simon had a thorough knowledge of our procedures: both military and civilian.

2. During the battle he also had a definite agenda planned out.

- A. His first move was to take command of our Raptor using his sidearm.

- B. His next used the Raptor's electronics to scan for Colonial ships in the area, and - upon detecting one - ordered me to FTL jump next to it.

- C. At this time I witnessed him using the device that Captain Kalrk turned over to you to apparently signal the cylons. A Raider FTL-hopped into the vicinity and destroyed the starliner that we found. Unfortunately the ship was lost with all hands.

D. The Raider also approached us but appeared to recognize us as a friendly. It did not fire on our Raptor and simply FTL jumped away.

3. It was at this point I realized that Lt. Landers was planning to continue setting death traps for surviving Colonial ships. He was also keeping me alive for a reason that I have yet to determine.

4. I therefore blew the hatch on my Raptor to catch him by surprise. I was fortunate to avoid getting, shot but in the process broke my left arm in a fight to regain control of the Raptor.

5. Whatever that device is, the cylons can obviously detect it from great distances. I recommend leaving it off.

6. I have an electrical engineering degree, so I understand computer hardware and FTL technology very well. I would therefore also suggest that we immediately put our best people to work analyzing Simon's signaling device. We need to determine what types of signals it puts out and ascertain whether or not it has additional capabilities that we do not yet know about.

Respectfully,
Cardelli, Patrick M., Lieutenant

Mercurius **Edge of the Ragnar Storm**

Since just after 0800, *Mercurius* had been at the edge of Ragnar's atmosphere, keeping watch for any cylon vessels.

Now, the destroyer *Douglas J. Griffyn* had joined him.

Kalrk was uneasy. The cylons had been defeated by *Libra*, *Perseus* and *Griffyn*; and their frigate *Heron* destroyed. He expected that the cylons would have returned to Ragnar with a vengeance, but they had not. It didn't add up to Kalrk, and that made him very uneasy.

"Psy, I have a new mission." He said to his newly appointed bodyguard.

He switched on his wireless.

"*Griffyn*, this is *Mercurius*.. I have a new mission, which is top priority and cannot be stated over wireless. See you in a few hours.

Mercurius out."

He turned off his transponder, rendering the small ship invisible to DRADIS.

Then, *Mercurius* rose clear of the storm, and jumped.

Psy had paused, politely enough, while Kalrk completed his transmission to the *Griffyn*. Afterward she had opened her mouth to ask a question, but Kalrk had initiated jump before she could speak, so quickly that Psy's head spun.

After their arrival she looked outside and asked the question the jump had cut off: "Okay, what new mission?" Then in consternation she demanded, "Where in Hades are we?"

Back on the *Douglas J. Griffyn*, the transmission caught Herald by surprise, and the *Mercurius* was gone before he could respond.

"What the frak, where did they go?" Johnson asked the CO.

Herald stood there looking at the main DRADIS console, eyes locked on where the small blip had been, moments ago.

He picked up the handset, "Chief, this is *Griffyn* Actual, *Mercurius* has just jumped away. REPEAT, *Mercurius* has just jumped away. Prep a Raptor for launch to relay this message to *Libra*, and ask if this was intended."

He hung up the handset, and looked over at his XO.

New mission? What was Kalrk... suicidal? "The second he returns I want to be notified," Herald ordered.

Ragnar Anchorage
PO2 Alexandra MacLean
Day 01 1127 Hours

It was chaos, but an organized chaos that Mac was used to. The knuckledraggers had gotten an idea of what things to look for and how to handle them, so even though they looked like a bunch of headless chickens, they knew what to do.

Someone from the *Libra* had thought to send over a bunch of box meals, so Mac was making sure everyone took breaks to eat. She even took enough time to eat a sandwich, herself, and she snagged an extra meal for Pvt Wolfe.

"Thanks, Mac," he said, accepting it with a sheepish look on his face.

"My brothers were always hungry, and none of them were as big as you, Pvt Wolfe," she replied with a chuckle.

"Oh, ah, please, call me Dan," he replied. He opened the box and explained ruefully, "I always get teased about my appetite."

Mac nodded and said with humor, "I can imagine."

Jo looked from one to other, puzzled, "Pourquoi? Dan is like the firemen in Papa's unit. That is not unusual..." She took a bite of her own sandwich, and said, with deadpan expression, "It is not that Dan is big; it's the other men that are little."

Dan guffawed; Mac opened her mouth, then closed it, grinning. *Oh gods no I won't say it...*

"What?" Dan asked suspiciously, giving her a mock glare.

Mac shook her head again.

"C'mon, give," Dan pretended to be threatening.

Mac rolled her eyes. "My brothers always used to say, size doesn't matter when you're laying down..."

She turned and walked away, leaving them laughing behind her, thinking, *Chief Sutton was right... there is a life outside the hangar deck. Never would have thought I'd have jarheads as friends.* She thought of Frankie Laffitte, smiling slightly to herself. *Oh, Frankie, too bad you're such a player... a cute one, though.* She smiled again.

"Hey, Mac, could you take a look at this..." one of the specialists came up to her, and she turned her thoughts back to work.

Lieutenant Patrick Cardelli
Battlestar *Libra*, Port flight pod
Day 01 1205 Hours

Having grabbed a quick lunch and completed most of the paperwork needed to make his transfer to the *Libra* official, Patrick walked out into the midst of all of the people crowding the Battlestar's port hangar bay. Most of the orange jump-suited technicians were busy working on the Raptors and Vipers, poking about here and there with their tools in the electronic guts of the various complex flying

machines.

Paperwork! Silently Cardelli laughed in disgust to himself... the entire human race could cease to exist (almost had actually), and yet there were still reports to write and forms to sign. He really couldn't blame anyone for keeping up the normal routine - no one was really ready to accept the fact that things were very different now than they had been just a short 24 hours prior.

He bypassed the Vipers for the moment and made his way to the Raptor group on the other side of the huge flight pod. He continued walking until he recognized N728ER and grinned at the cruel twist of irony. If Raptor 727 from Aerilon was out of commission, well... then he guessed that it made perfect sense that he should take over command of number 728 from *Libra*.

The hatch was wide open but his bird was empty, so he surveyed the unfamiliar faces scurrying about carefully. It was a very difficult scene for him to watch because he could see the anxiety in their eyes and the urgency motivating them to action.

Taking a deep breath Patrick whistled with the perfection of one well-practiced and loud enough that his sister Adrianna would have giggled with delight were she present. In the immediate area surrounding him the sound of equipment and muddle of voices suddenly went dead silent. With a smirk the brash young Lieutenant noticed that all eyes were on him.

"Listen up for a minute people!" he said with a shout. "My name is Lieutenant Patrick Michael Cardelli, and as of this day and time I have been ordered to take command of the Chimera Raptor squadron. So as soon as someone points me in the direction of a Sadie Brant you can all go back to work."

One of the men in the orange jumpsuits harrumphed at him. "Lynx is talking to one of the Captains over there..." he pointed with a greasy thumb. "She's the tall, muscular brunette - you can't miss her."

"Thanks!" Cardelli said, nodding to the man. He headed off in the direction indicated as everyone shrugged off the interruption and returned to their business at hand.

* * *

He found Sadie visiting with some of the mechanics working on one of the Mark VIIIs. Grinning, he walked up to her and introduced himself, shaking her hand and getting a warm smile in return.

"So Maur found us a young pup to take over the Chimeras, huh?" she

commented, sizing up his tall athletic figure. She noted with a smug grin that he was taller than her, but not by much. "Please tell me you're my new pilot."

"That would be affirmative," Patrick replied, smiling back. "I haven't been on the *Libra* for very long but I did hear that you folks had a tough time of it."

"Everyone did," she said fiercely, and he raised an eyebrow at her expression. "The frakking cylons slipped some sort of virus into our navigation software and it screwed everything up. We've been scrambling ever since the fighting started to find older versions that still work."

"I trust everything does," he said with a hint of concern.

"So far," she noted. But she gestured at the blackened areas on the Mark VII they stood next to and the pock marks along its fuselage. "But we're completely outgunned by the cylons, that's for certain. I don't see how we can win."

"I'm hoping we don't stick around long enough to try," Patrick told her. "Trying to take them on now that we're scraping the bottom of the barrel for military supplies is just not going to work. We're lucky to have a decent sized fleet around us... many of the civilian ships were not nearly so fortunate. He stepped up to the cockpit of the viper and visually surveyed the electronics inside carefully. "So our firewalls will work to keep our networking secure?" he wondered.

"The ones that haven't been compromised... yes," Lynx told him confidently. "All of the latest versions that we've received in the past few months had hidden back doors in them - secret access points that the cylons could activate and run subroutines that either screwed up the systems or shut them down." She shook her head. "It's pretty elaborate... some of it is even using pieces of the legit code. We'd have to virtually rewrite the entire thing to get rid of it."

"So that's why you went back to the older versions..."

"Yup," she brushed a lock of dark hair with a bit of gray in it out of her eyes. "If we had known in advance we could have put up one hell of a defense, but this... trap..." A deep sigh escaped her lips. "Everything just happened too fast."

Cardelli leaned into the viper and activated its systems. The consoles lit up perfectly and he checked a few settings. "There'll be time to second guess everything later..." he decided. "Until then, I'd like to make sure all of the Raptors in the Chimera group are certified one hundred percent functional. If this complex integration

of hardware and software is up and running then we should be able to certify our birds too."

Again she sized him up as he continued to lean into the cockpit of the Mark VII. "I also hope that there will be time for you to seriously consider the option of making hot passionate love to an older woman," she said seductively, watching his reaction carefully as he turned to look at her in utter astonishment.

Patrick read the look in her eyes carefully and couldn't help smiling to cover his blush. "I like you, Lt. Sadie Brant," he said with a grin. "Most people have forgotten to keep a positive attitude during this most trying crisis. You and I are going to get along just fine."

Quarters of Colonel Brennan Herald
Commanding Officer, Destroyer *Douglas J. Griffyn*
Day 01 0923 Hours

Where had Kalrk gone, and why? These were the only thoughts that plagued Herald. Miles almost had to twist Herald's arm to get him to go to his rack, but he won in the end. "An hour of sleep... that's all, I have to get back to CIC," he kept telling himself.

"What if the cylons capture him, and they find out our coordinates," he asked himself out loud. The variables were countless... so many outcomes.

"What do we do when he returns, he's not part of the military, so CAN we punish him," Herald wondered.

This was too much to handle at one time, the Colonies gone... safeguarding the rest of humanity... any minute the cylons could attack the remnants of the Battlegroup. Sleep... sleep would be his only escape, one that he would welcome wholeheartedly.

He knew his family was gone, he knew his wife and little girl had perished, but he had to sleep... to go on... so their deaths would be avenged.

He kept thinking for a few more moments, and drifted off to sleep, not realizing that he had forgotten to set an alarm.

Psyche D'argent, and Kalrk
Aboard *Mercurius*

0921 Hours

"We're near the moon Cassiopeia.' Kalrk replied, answering Psy's second question only. "You heard Lt. Cardelli tell the commander, tell us, about his dad's mining operation. We need that tylium, so I'm.. we're doing a little recon."

He was throwing some switches, and pushing some buttons on the console as he spoke.

"*Mercurius* is now invisible to DRADIS. We'll drift over to the moon and take some pretty pictures of the surface, and we'll see what is going on down there, and above there. After a few hours, we'll mosey back to Ragnar and give a report."

Near *Libra* CIC

By all estimations, the Raptor to relay the message of *Mercurius*' jump had reached the *Libra* by now, and now the Raptor pilot was talking to Rodriguez. But it was just estimation... no one would know for sure.

When Commander Herald had dispatched a Raptor to *Libra*, the mission had been assigned to junior Lieutenant Drake Akai. Akai had reported Kalrk's mysterious departure immediately upon his arrival at the battlestar. Now, with his bird tucked away on the hangar deck, Akai was heading towards the CIC to repeat his message in person. Tucked under his right arm was a folder with the question from Colonel Herald.

He rounded the corner to the CIC, and was stopped by two Marine guards and asked what was in his hands.

"This is a relay message from Colonel Herald of the *Griffyn*," he said, displaying the outside markings on the folder. One of the Marines nodded, saying, "Proceed, sir."

Akai had only seen pictures of the Commander; had never seen him in person, but the Raptor pilot spotted Rodrigues easily. The commander's presence on the bridge, and the way the entire room seemed to revolve around him, made the task simple.

Battlestar *Libra* Liza Liala, CBI

After Cardelli had departed, Liala stood before the commander, alone. She steeled herself and spoke his name. "Commander Rodrigues..."

"Ms. Liala." If there had been something more she intended with her initial address, it was cut off. Rodrigues raised his eyes from his work, his gaze assessing the woman who stood before him. Liala felt as though she were facing a CBI instructor during a qualifying exam.

"I feel we should further discuss your ideas as pertaining to the future formation of a government," Liala said, managing to squeeze out the sentence with a steady voice.

Strange. She had been nothing but confident in her investigation aboard the Grandeur. In control. In command. In her element. Nothing but confident as she aimed her weapon at Huffland Confident even as she expected him to aim one at her, or shoot her where she stood. And yet this... this frightened her, the roles she was potentially being asked to take on. She kept her voice level, and cordial, and respectful, hiding the strange fear of such things deep inside.

"Commander, I have now come to suspect, thankfully, this was not what you were implying. But in case it was, know this - I refuse to become President. I may not legally do so."

She took a deep breath, and continued, with a solemn expression, before she lost her nerve - Her nerve to agree to even what little she was about to agree to, for which she was not trained. To agree to what she knew must come to pass.

"I will, however, serve in whatever other capacity is required of me - up to and including a temporary leadership role, if so needed and desired, continuing until such time when elections can be held, or a more senior official is located."

The Commander stood there, listening intently to her concerns. She seemed very stressed, and he was concerned especially with her worries of becoming President.

"Miss Liala, no one has said anything about making you President. We can't just appoint someone, but I will remember your willingness to serve as SOME sort of government authority if the need comes up."

"But back to matter at hand, we need to find out exactly who this saboteur is, and if there are any other collaborators in our fleet. We need to make sure that humanity survives long enough to be able to rebuild its government."

"I am giving you a small contingent of Marines to go back to the Grandeur with you, and help you complete the investigation. But I will have to recall them sometime today, so make the investigation speedy."

He pulled out a list of six names and read it to her. "Sergeant Joshua Scott, Lance Corporal Kathleen Kim, Privates First Class Francois Laffitte and Felipe Barbosa, and Privates Adam Fales and Samuel Tapia." Rodrigues focused again on Liala's face. "These are all good men, most from First Platoon, Second Squad here aboard *Libra*. To not arouse civilian fears, they will go undercover with you. They are yours to advise, but they will check in every two hours on the progress. I'll expect your report to accompany theirs. Understood?"

She nodded, firmly. "Yes, Commander. Excellent. Thank you for the back up."

Excellent, indeed. She finally had confirmation that he did not intend her to be President. More than that....He was viewing her, even after her reluctant agreement to step into a leadership role if needed, in her former--and current--role, still. Complete her investigation. Catch the damn saboteur. Be what she was.

With a final nod to him, she exited the room, heading for her Raptor, where she would meet the Marines. Her only regret was that Rodrigues had indicated she could have them only for a day. The likelihood, she knew, of this investigation--or almost any investigation, for that matter--being finished in a day was only slightly larger than the likelihood that all the cylons would turn into large green frogs.

Still, it was something. It showed he respected her, for what she was. It showed he was committed to supporting her investigation. And something, no mater how briefly it could be had, was always better than nothing.

***Libra* CIC**
D01 T0930

Lieutenant Akai found the Commander, saluted, and handed him the folder.

The Commander opened it, and read the contents.

From: Colonel Brennan Herald, Destroyer *Douglas J. Griffyn*
To: Commander Benito Rodriguez, Battlestar *Libra*

Message: The *Mercurius* has jumped away. Captain Kalrk stated that he was going on a mission that could not be discussed over wireless, and proceeded to engage FTL drives. I am requesting orders for what to do upon his return, and asking if this event

was on orders from you, sir?

The Commander quickly jotted down a response, and then gave the folder back to the Raptor pilot. "Take this back to the *Griffyn*, Lieutenant," he said.

Akai saluted, and briskly walked off.

PFC Francois Laffitte
Day 01 0716 Hours

It felt strange to be wearing civilian clothes, but those were the orders he received. Civilian clothes, concealed weapon, 0715 by the raptor N237ER; he and five other Marines were to accompany a civilian, Ms Liza Liala, to the Grandeur and assist her in an investigation. She would fill them in; they were to obey her orders as if they came from the Commander himself.

So Frankie stood there and smiled to the pretty young woman who was also there, while he waited for the old hag who was surely in charge.

Quote: "*Mercurius* is now invisible to DRADIS. We'll drift over to the moon and take some pretty pictures of the surface, and we'll see what is going on down there, and above there. After a few hours, we'll mosey back to Ragnar and give a report."

Aboard *Mercurius*
0923 Hours

"OK, is this an official mission, or just one you came up with now, off the top of your head?" Psyche D'Argent asked with a hint of amusement.

"Does it matter?" Kalrk smirked. "It has to be done. We're officially doing it." He reached under his seat and pulled out his helmet, a replica of a cylon centurion's head from the first cylon War, only this was black.

"No I guess not.... Whoa... what the frak is that?"

"This is my helmet.. custom-made. I told you I've studied the War." He settled the helmet under his arm. "You need to wear an enviro-suit, just in case. Come on, I've got a few to spare." He stood up and walked out of the cockpit to the main compartment of the ship, the private quarters.

Enviro-Suit. Psy felt her mind start to clog up at the thought, and the *Mercurius* started to feel just that much smaller. "Yeah, no, it's OK. I'm fine without one, thank you very much," she said, trying to hide her fear.

"It's not a request, Psy. In the event of a hull breach - though I'm not planning on one - but if there were one, we need to wear enviro-suits. Just as viper and raptor pilots do, just in case. So come on back here."

Her breathing was starting to pick up, but she quickly brought it under control. She could not let him or anyone else see her fear. She put on a well practiced smile and replied, "I don't see how anything could happen. Didn't you just say that we are invisible to DRADIS? I'm sure we will be fine and I would not want to delay any of this just so I could get some silly suit on." Her words seemed confident, hiding the part of her that was screaming in horror at the thought of being caged in.

Why was she resisting? What was going on? He wasn't sure, but her voice was different; her inflection. "Psy, I don't understand why you are being so resistant about this. This is a safety measure." He was holding the empty enviro-suit.

She looked at it and felt like she was going to puke, but he was starting to ask why and she had no real reason for resisting this, without going into the truth, and he could never know the truth. She could never let anyone know. *Come on, Psy, she thought to herself. you can do this; it's just clothes and the helmet is even see-through. It's not a big deal. You are stronger than this stupid irrational fear.*

Psy walked over to Kalrk, not looking at the suit but at him the whole time. "Fine, just give me a minute to put it on." She said as she took the suit from his hands, not able to keep the slight shake from her hands.

If he was human he wouldn't have noticed. But he wasn't human and he did notice. She was nervous about this. "I'll wait at the controls," he said, to give her privacy.

She watched him leave, her palms sweating and her heart pounding. *One step at a time and you can do this, because you can't let him see you like that.* She stepped into the jumpsuit and zipped it up. She was actually starting to feel like she could do this; that maybe she had finally conquered her fear, and in that confidence she grabbed the helmet and plopped it into place without thinking about it.

Almost instantly her fear rushed up to grab hold of her. She began to shake as the walls closed in on her and her breathing turned to hyperventilating. The room was spinning and she fell to her knees. Tears escaped from her eyes.

She started to scream incoherently. "Get it off! Oh gods, get this off of me!" In her panic she was unable to help herself.

Then he was there, removing the helmet. How did he get here so fast, she would have wondered, if she was thinking straight. "It's OK." He said as he held her in both arms now. "You're all right, Psy."

Psy, in her fear and blind panic, struck out at him as she could not seem to focus on anything but her fear. His arms and hands were faster than hers. He grabbed her by the wrists, and held her. "Psy, it's over."

She whimpered and shook her head, still trying to free herself from whatever it was that was trying to grab hold of her.

He spun her around, so that she was longer facing him; his arms wrapped around her. "Shh... Psy. Princess." He was whispering into her ear. "You're OK. It's over."

His voice and the feel of him was starting to penetrate through her cloud of panic. Her heart that a minute ago was pounding in fear, was now starting to pound for another reason.

She turned in his arms. She wanted to see him, needed to.

She looked him right in the eyes, such beautiful blue eyes, and saw something kindred in them. "You don't wear contacts." she whispered.

He smiled. "No." He whispered back, still holding her with both arms, but not so tightly now. "No, I don't wear contacts."

Psy was still shaking but now from the feeling of being so close to him. Her knees were weak; the bottom of her feet even tingled, and she found herself wondering what it would be like to feel his lips on hers. The thought was like a bucket of cold water and she jerked away from him.

"I'm sorry. I don't know what came over me. I'm being so silly. It's just a stupid helmet," she spoke in a rush.

"It's OK." he said, still in a whisper, with compassion. He cleared his throat. "You're right; you won't need to wear it."

She laughed sardonically "And if we loose cabin pressure I die,

right?" She looked right at him, her composure returning. "No," she said, shaking her head. "No, I can do this. I *will* do this," She spoke with determination, but then her voice turned small and trembled a bit. "Do you think you could help me... put on the helmet? Stay with me?" She said her voice full of the vulnerability she was feeling.

"Yes. I'll help. I'll stay with you." He was being more gentle with her, than he had ever been in his life. "It'll be our secret."

She felt waves of relief wash over her and gave him a weak smile. "OK." she walked over to him and looked him in the eyes. "I'm ready whenever you are," she said softly, never breaking eye contact.

"I'm..." he was confused, unsure of what had all transpired, of what was transpiring even now. Her eyes. He could not look away. "I'm ready," he whispered yet again.

Psy bent down to where the helmet lay, picked it up, and handed it to him. It was as though a spell was lifted. Not entirely, but somewhat. She had broken his gaze. He blinked while she was getting the helmet. Why was he so warm?

When she handed him the helmet, he looked at it, and not at her. "Thanks. Let's take it slow."

"Sure. Slow sounds good." she said looking back at him while taking a big breath. "OK, let's get this started"

Liza Liala, CBI
Battlestar Libra
0716 Hours

Liza had been standing outside the Raptor, waiting. When the first man appeared, she resisted the urge to smirk, briefly. His bearing gave him away, at least to her observant eyes, despite his civilian clothing. Strangely, however, he then stopped... and stood there, Gods only knew why, smiling, saying nothing to her and making no move towards the Raptor.

"Is something wrong, Mister...?" her voice trained off, uncertain of the young man's name.

"Francois Laffitte, mam'selle, but you can call me Frankie. And you are?" His smile was wide and charming, and his eyes twinkled, like they always did when he was looking at an attractive woman.

"Liza Liala, Colonial Bureau of Investigations." she pulled open her

jacket, briefly flashing her ID at him, and by pure coincidence allowing him to catch the slightest glimpse of her gun in its concealed shoulder holster.

"Sacre bleu! You are." He chuckled with good humor. "I'm supposed to obey your every order, mam'selle."

She raised one eyebrow slightly. "Oh? Excellent. My first order is answer this question: Why in the name of the Gods are you so surprised that I am who you were sent to meet?"

"Ahh, mam'selle, agents in charge of investigations that require Marine support are not supposed to be beautiful young women. I was expecting... an old hag? And I get a goddess! Most fortunate for me, no?"

Now, the eyebrow went up even further.

"The fortunate thing for all of us will be if we are able to catch the saboteur before he strikes again. Were you fully briefed on the situation?"

He turned serious. "No. We were told Ms. Liala would brief us on the nature of the investigation. A saboteur? On the Grandeur? How did you find out?" He was all business now.

She glanced around, spotted a few people, and gestured at the Raptor.

"Let's step inside to discuss that."

He followed her inside, all levity gone from his demeanor.

Eliana Kareen "Lace" Lawrence
Battlestar *Libra*
0716 Hours

She groaned, her eyelids fluttering, as she tried to open them. When she did, her head exploded with pain, and she squeezed them shut again, trying to choke back a sob.

She needn't have worried about choking it back, however. The room, she could now hear, was full of such groans and sobs and even the occasional scream.

The pain was beyond anything she had ever felt... And finally she realized where she was. Finally, she remembered... the battle... the Raider... the damage... the crash.

Despite the agony, despite the screams around her, despite the situation and despite the fact that even now she could feel herself fading back out of consciousness once more... A small smile played briefly on her face, tugging the corners of her lips up for an instant into a satisfied expression, no matter how the movement hurt her.

She had made it. She had landed her Viper, damaged so badly she had known the odds were stacked against her, and survived.

Libra Conference Room
Day 01 0615 Hours

The three men sat at the table with the rest of the captains and invitees around them. They had introduced themselves to all and had done well with the others, some moreso, some less.

When the Commander walked into the conference room he had addressed them all: "Forgive me for the delay ladies and gentlemen. I am Commander Benito Rodrigues. I believe we have a lot to discuss."

It was understandable. There was a lot of work that was done already. A lot more ahead.

Ten minutes later the Commander picked up a remote, dimmed the lights and turned a screen on. The screen was displaying the colony of Picon. It was a horrifying site, cylon basships in orbit, clouds of nuclear fire visible across the hemisphere.

The Commander explained that a raptor had recorded the video around one hour ago. The raptor had checked all the colonies. It was the same everywhere.

The Colonies were destroyed.

One of the Lieutenants uniform said, "From what I heard in my Raptor, most of the military took a beating. Is there anyone else left capable of fighting back?"

Robert Exter remembered a job he did for Picon Fleet Headquarters. He recalled his daughter Sarah saying something about meeting someone there. A Lieutenant. He was probably dead, one way or another.

This Lieutenant introduced himself as Patrick M. Cardelli. Lt. Cardelli talked about his ECO being a collaborator. This got Robert's interest more than anything. It could explain the Morning Angel's engine problems. It could have been just the engine but he wasn't sure. It was something to look into later.

After Lt. Cardelli talked about his ECO, Kalrk stood up and showed everyone a white electronic device saying it was the ECO's property and that it was not colonial, but cylon. Robert knew who Kalrk was - the president of K Industries. He knew he was a man to be trusted to know what he was talking about.

The Commander stopped him and asked for restraint in what he was talking about. Asking that everyone go one at a time he assured him things would go smoother.

Robert kept to himself. He knew it was bad business to speak without all the information. Captain Remus just sat there looking distressed. Captain Wilson was doing the same. Both were keeping it together.

Lt. Cardelli talked about his dad owning a tylium mine. Exter had met Mason Cardelli at a business meeting one time. He felt he was someone best avoided. But Lt. Cardelli's suggestion of finding fuel seemed like a reasonable one. Guess the evil you know is better than the evil you don't know, Exter thought.

At some point Xenthais Merconi spoke about how she thought there was no government and how she thought the people would accept military rule. Robert knew he wouldn't and from what he knew of some of the other captains they wouldn't either.

Captain Gibbs stood up. He said that everyone should be focused on surviving today and tomorrow and less about the government. The cylons were here. Robert had liked Captain Gibbs from the moment he talked about Kalrk when they first met over the wireless. The man made sense.

Lt. Cardelli explained that his dad was greedy and would step on anyone in his way. And that he'd want a say in any government that was formed. If they weren't careful he'd be a dictator. Indicating that he'd rule over them all. To which Kalrk said, "Bullfrak. Your daddy will give us the ore for military protection, because we are all helping one another. We all gain."

Kalrk made sense. Robert suddenly liked him more.

The Commander thanked Lt. Cardelli and said they should go over their current tactical information and turned the floor over to Colonel Herald. What he was talking about was grim - if the cylons came they'd be dead.

When everyone else had finished talking Robert spoke up. "I don't know if can be as useful as the rest of you but I have a ship and it can hold some passengers. It has a normal maximum of 150 but I'm told

it can hold more."

Captain Wilson spoke up "It can. It will require some work but we can convert it to hold 500."

Captain Remus took his turn to speak. "I can hold many people on my ship and can serve in other ways. The pressurized bio-dome can hold a lot. Captain Mueller if you wish to plant any seed on my ship to grow food please do so. It'll take some work to convert it from gardens but if it'll help it will be worth it.

After the meeting Captain Remus, Wilson, and Robert spoke a bit. They wanted to get to know Captain Mueller better as Remus expected to work with her. Robert was always on the look out for a friendly face. After speaking with her and a few of the other captains they left.

Cassiopeia Moon, Tylum Mine
Preparing to evacuate
Day 01 1245 Hours

Mason Cardelli tried not to appear agitated as he walked into the sophisticated communications station built into a large, spacious room in one of the underground mining tunnels. His people were not yet finished dismantling all of the equipment he figured that they would need for long-term survival somewhere outside of the Colonial star system. Anxiety was beginning to creep up on him along with the realization that their time was quickly running out.

"You wanted to see me Rod?" he asked one of the technicians working on the main console.

The elderly, gray haired man nodded at him and pointed to another of the consoles. On it Mason could see bright red indicators emanating from the icon representing the nearby military base. "The shuttles we've been sending out on reconnaissance missions are starting to pick up DRADIS emissions from the remnants of the Colonial base," he said with a cautioning tone of voice. "I would guess that they're setting up defensive military capability that may or may not include surface to air missile support."

"If we don't leave soon our shuttles are going to get shot out of the sky before they can jump to safety," Cardelli groaned.

"Possibly," Rod Strickland replied. "If we exit the hangar low and move away from the base we'll be out of range and they won't be able to get a lock on us until we're clear and able to jump." He paused, continuing to analyze the telemetry from the latest shuttle mission. "But our shuttle can only see what's on this side of the moon. If we

wait too long, the cylons can jump ships into position on the other side of Cassiopeia and we will never see them. They can lay in wait, then ambush us after we launch." He looked at his boss cautiously. "We also have no way of knowing if they're already there."

Mason sighed heavily. "We'll have one of the shuttles check before we go," he decided. "We're only going to get one chance at this and if we leave before we have all of the supplies that we need to start our lives over somewhere else then we're still just as dead. Wherever we end up going we need the capability to sustain ourselves on a long-term basis. I'm afraid that this cylon situation isn't going to go away for a long time."

"Don't wait too much longer Mason," Rod warned him as Cardelli headed back out the door.

"I'll pass the word along to the others," Cardelli promised. "Everything non-essential to our long-term survival will have to stay behind."

Douglas J. Griffyn
1230 Hours

In the CIC of the destroyer *Douglas J. Griffyn* a warning sounded. "DRADIS contact," Lt. Braddock said. "It's the *Mercurius!*"

Kalrk's voice came over the wireless. [*Griffyn*, come in. This is *Mercurius*. Mission accomplished.]

Colonel Herald picked up a handset. "Captain Kalrk, I'm sure that where you went can't be discussed over the wireless, so you have clearance to land in our port flight pod. We will discuss where you went and why upon your arrival. Come on in," Herald said.

We can't punish him, he's not military. But we'll have to make sure that the cylons didn't detect him, Herald kept thinking, unsure of the whole situation.

"Get Lt Akai's Raptor ready to fly, we'll need to report everything to the Commander," Herald told his XO.

Aboard *Mercurius*, Kalrk responded to the Colonel. "Copy that *Griffyn* will be right over" Kalrk replied then pushed a few buttons on the console in front of him and without stopping what he was doing he told the woman beside him, "You have 10 minutes to get changed."

Psyche D'Argent jumped from the co-pilot seat and rushed to the back of the cabin to get ready. Who knew that all those 10 minute quick

changes from her modeling and beauty queen days would come in handy during her military career, she thought. And who knew that the chunk of clothes her father had sent when she first joined, in the hopes of tempting her back to her old life, would come in handy too.

She took all of two minutes to put the outfit on, then she strapped her knife to her thigh under her skirt. She slipped on her gun holster and gun before pulling on a jacket. Psy then slipped on pair of four-inch stilettos and threw her hair up in to a french twist. Lastly she put on the barest touches of makeup.

She gave her hands a quick look and sighed - they were a dead give away but she had no time for that now. Later she would have to give them a manicure.

One last look in the mirror and she could see that the image of dutiful daughter and beauty queen had returned. She also realized she was too well dressed for just an assistant, but her only other chose of cloths had been jeans and a t-shirt. Like Darla her beauty coach used to always say, "Better over dressed for any occasion, than under dressed."

With that Psy rushed back to her seat as the *Mercurius* began its landing sequence aboard the *Griffyn*.

Commander Rodrigues' Office
Battlestar Libra
1310 Hours

"I don't know what you were thinking, Kalrk," Rodrigues hissed through clenched teeth. "I asked you to assist Colonel Herald with guarding the entrance to the station, NOT jumping off on some... mission. I have the strongest urge to throw you in the brig and let you rot there, or better yet, leave you here on Ragnar!"

Rodrigues slowly sat down, calming his anger. "Mister Kalrk," he said more calmly, "despite the fact you are not a member of the military it was decided this fleet would fall under military guidance until we can establish a civilian authority. That being said I asked you to assist in guarding the entrance to the Anchorage until we could resupply and leave. That stunt you pulled could have turned into a disaster. Had the cans shown up the *Griffyn* would have been alone with no backup and nobody else to warn us they were here."

Rodrigues rose again and came around his desk to stand face to face with Kalrk. "Now what was so gods damned important for you to up and jump away like that?"

Kalrk looked at the commander and responded, "The future safety of the fleet." When Rodrigues remained silent, Kalrk understood he expected a further explanation.

"We have planes set to jump to the moon of Cassiopeia, and it appeared we were going to do so - blindly." Kalrk stressed the word 'we' slightly each time he said it, hoping to convey to the Commander that he intended to be a team player. "By not scouting at all, or sending in a raptor, we might have tipped off the cylons to our presence."

Kalrk continued, his voice carefully matter-of-fact. "The *Mercurius* is uniquely equipped for stealth and vitually invisible to DRADIS. That made it the best ship for a recon mission. I am sorry if you feel your toes have been stepped on, Commander. That was not my intention. This needed to be done, though, and with collaborators running loose I did not feel it was safe enough to speak of over the wireless."

"It seems that it was the right decision because the place is crawling with centurions. The base is in shambles but the mine seems to still be operating and there are people left alive there." With that Kalrk handed over all the intelligence he had gathered from his mission. "I'm sure you will find this useful. It goes into much more detail about what we found over there. It should be noted that we did not see any raiders or base stars while there."

Kark finished off with, "Now, Commander, is there anything else you would like to know?"

"As a matter of fact there is Mister Kalrk. When do you plan to do something like this again? Because if you do I'll have a special cell set up for you where you can spend some quality time."

"Now I appreciate your thoughts on this matter and your candor, however get one thing straight here and now. You clear it through me first before you go off on your own. You may have studied the cylons but you don't know everything there is to know about them."

"We haven't seen them in over forty years. Therefore there is no guarantee they didn't see you in your ship just now. That's all just *your* belief."

Rodrigues took a look at the data Kalrk gave him. "I'll read this data and get back to you, Kalrk. Now get out of my office before I space your ass."

Kalrk was tempted to argue the point but decided against it, as that would only lead to questions he did not want to answer at this point.

Instead he decided that at the moment it would be in his and everyone else's best interest to let the Commander have it his way and just keep quiet.

As Kalrk left Rodrigues turned to Herald, who had stood silently observing throughout the entire exchange. "Now Colonel, remind me why I didn't shoot him out of the sky?"

"I'm not sure, sir, I've never faced a situation like this," he said plainly. "You are completely right about his behavior - it is too erratic, he acts independently, and gave us NO warning that he was to go gallivanting off to the moon without us," Herald said. Rodrigues merely scowled in reply.

"Sir, I need to get back to the *Griffyn*. If we get ambushed, they're going to need every person they can get. Do you want me to keep an eye on him sir?" Herald asked.

Outside of Rodrigues' office, Kalrk turned to Psyche D'Argent, his Marine bodyguard. "The commander was... impressed... by my initiative." His smirk was a clear sign to her that he was being sarcastic. Turning serious, he added, "Let's go back to *Mercurius*, and see if I'm allowed to launch, to take up sentry duty."

On their walk, he was lost in his thoughts about the fleet, the cylons and himself... and one of Rodrigues' statements: *You don't know everything there is to know about them.*

It was true. Kalrk couldn't fathom why the cylons hadn't returned to Ragnar after the colonials had wiped out the raiders and Heron. What were the cylons waiting for? And what were they doing at Cassiopeia? It didn't make sense to Kalrk, and that made him all the more nervous.

LT. Rayna "Draco" Darkstone
JRLT Eliana Kareen "Lace" Lawrence
Battlestar *Libra*, Infirmary
Day 01, 0717 Hours

She couldn't sleep. There was just too much suffering going on around her. Too much agony and pain. She kept her eyes squeezed shut most of the time, but it didn't make it go away. Finally Rayna opened her eyes again and reluctantly looked around.

"This is horrible..." She didn't want to continue that line of thought.

Then Rayna noticed a red-headed female pilot near her. They had brought the pilot in earlier when she was unconscious, but now she was awake. Rayna wanted to talk to her but couldn't think of anything to say. There was a few minutes of silence as Rayna just watched her. She had to say something, anything to distract her.

"H-Hey, Lieutenant... *sigh* It's good to see you're alive." Rayna gave a bittersweet smile, even though the Lieutenant didn't see it.

Eliana tried to respond to whoever was speaking to her, but she found that moving her jaw caused even more pain than moving just her lips.

"Thanks," she managed to say, barely louder than a whisper. She figured the speaker was most likely another pilot - the comment would have been odd, otherwise. She tried opening her eyes once more, but closed them again quickly at the first hint of light. It was obvious, though, that the other woman could see, since she had called Eliana "Lieutenant". All she had been able to discern about her condition so far was that she must not have broken her neck, seeing as though she could move her fingers and toes. She didn't quite have the courage to reach a hand up to her head and neck. But the other woman could see her. She forced her mouth to move once more, and addressed the mysterious voice with a question she hoped did not sound too strange.

"How does it look?"

Rayna choked out a brief laugh, though she wasn't sure from where it came. It was probably a mix of nervousness and trying to comfort herself. For a moment she considered saying, "I've seen worse. Compared to some of the people in here..." She reconsidered, though.

"You'll be fine." she said sincerely. Then she realized the Lieutenant couldn't see her.

"Oh, um... I'm Draco." She also realized how impersonal her callsign was. This woman needed comforting. Rayna needed comforting too, and not from just another military pilot. "My name's Rayna. I fly with the Black Crows." Rayna winced, squeezing her eyes shut for a moment and holding back a tear. Her voice was laden in remorse. "Or what's left of them," she said quietly.

The right side of her head still hurt. In fact now it was throbbing and she was feeling a bit dizzy. She put her head back down. "Sorry.. I'm feelin' kinda... kinda tired all of a sudden..."

E-Note

*From: Major Kraig Maur
To: Commander Benito Rodrigues
Re: Cassiopeia*

Commander Rodrigues,

I realize you are busy hence this quick E-Note to your personal workstation. I will be brief.

Lt. Patrick Cardelli has been reassigned to command the Chimera Raptor squadron as per your order. The death of 728's previous pilot Captain Seth Finn saddens me greatly as I knew both him and his family personally.

Cardelli and I have been discussing the possibility of an FTL jump to the Cassiopeia moon. We are both convinced that our fleet will need to stop there if we are to obtain adequate fuel to prolong both our fight and our survival. However, as we also know there is a military base nearby it is quite likely that it was targeted during the initial strike and that we will encounter additional cylon forces upon our arrival.

In the event that the fleet jumps to Cassiopeia I would like to request additional ordnance for Raptor N728ER. Specifically two missiles are needed, one with a conventional explosive tip and a second containing a low yield nuclear warhead. During our next status meeting I will brief you on the additional details of this mission. For now, suffice it to say that Cardelli's plan is a good one and I fully support it.

K Maur, MJR

Battlestar Libra Day 01 1455 Hours

Lt. Patrick Cardelli stepped through an open hatchway just as a Marine shooed one of the *Libra* deck crew past him. "You're not allowed past this area sir," the Marine said patiently. "The rule is that they'll bring the stuff here and your team can move the supplies the rest of the way onto the ship."

Patrick stopped the man in the orange jumpsuit with a polite "Hello" and introduced himself. The medium-sized fellow with a grizzled beard smiled in reply.

"I guess there's plenty to do," Cardelli said with a chuckle.

"Yeah... yeah there certainly is," the deckhand replied. He cast an annoyed glance back toward the Marine who was moving back down the corridor to his assigned station. "Some of us would be doing even more if those jarheads would lighten up a little."

"Those jarheads answer to bigger and more powerful jarheads," Patrick told him. "They don't need someone chewing their ass out any more than you or I do."

"I know," the man replied with a laugh. He looked intently into Cardelli's eyes, trying to get a grasp of the man in the pilot's uniform that stood beside him. "This is all just nuts, isn't it?" he said with a note of anxiety. "I mean, humanity as a whole is usually only one step away from beating each other over the head with sticks on any normal day, but this time it's really happening."

"I'd stow that attitude if I were you," Patrick suggested. "There are plenty of people who are rattled enough over what has happened without you planting the seed of guilt on their conscience. Last time I checked an unprovoked attack was the other guy's fault, not mine."

With that, he left the deckhand standing there dumbfounded and continued down the corridor to the Marine station.

"Can I help you sir?" the Marine asked politely.

"I'm Lieutenant Cardelli," Patrick told him. "Major Maur asked me to enter the Anchorage and find an Alexandra MacLean. I'm supposed to get a progress report." He noted with satisfaction that both the Marine guard and his partner looked him carefully over before waving him through.

"Yes sir, I was told to expect you."

Patrick moved through the docking hatch and onto the Anchorage, and his first impression was awe at how huge the station was. There were two large metallic doors that had been swung most of the way inward and he studied them both for a moment... taking careful notice of how old they were. He also inspected the perfectly placed circle of bullet holes around the hatch and put his fingers in the area where the central locking system had been shot to pieces. At some point during the very recent past, the door had been expertly forced open.

Pulling out the wireless he had been given he continued into Ragnar station. "This is Lieutenant Patrick Cardelli calling Alexandra MacLean," he said warily. "Major Maur wants a status report, so I would appreciate it if someone could direct me to your location."

PO2 Alexandra MacLean
Day 01 1502 Hours

Frak, I think I'm getting used to this thing, Mac thought as she pulled the wireless from her pocket. She said into it, "LT, I'm at Deck Charlie, Station 29... the Marines down there can direct you, or I can send someone to bring you here, whichever you want."

Lt Patrick Cardelli
A moment later

Patrick shook his head and glanced back at one of the Marines standing at the entrance to Ragnar. "I hate to pull one of you off of your assigned station, but..."

"We heard," one of the Marines said with a grin. "Don't worry, if anyone even shows up looking suspicious my partner here will shoot first and ask questions later." He pointed inside the station and Patrick followed his lead.

It took longer than he expected - Patrick continued to be astonished at how huge the station was. Although he had vaguely heard of it in the past, this was the first time he had actually set foot inside of it. Eventually they found Deck Charlie and Patrick could see a series of numbers on the walls getting larger as they progressed.

"I can find 29 from here," he grinned. "Thanks a lot."

"No problem," the Marine guard responded as he headed back to his post.

People were moving hurriedly past him as he progressed, but Cardelli found a couple of people visiting at the end of the corridor near Station 28.

"Excuse me," he said purposefully. "I'm Lt. Cardelli, and I am hoping to find an Alexandra MacLean somewhere around here."

"I think Mac is in Station 29," one of them turned and pointed. "She'll be the one looking harassed, with the clipboard."

* * *

"A whole pallet of avionics stuff, Mac," Specialist Serik Smith said. "For Raptors?" he scratched his head, thinking. "Yes, Raptors."

Mac nodded, scribbling. "Okay, great, thanks Smitty."

She glanced up, spotting someone in a flight suit. Nice looking guy... must be that LT. She walked over and saluted. "Lt Cardelli? I'm Petty Officer MacLean."

"Howdy," Cardelli said with a grin. He immediately liked her smile. "It's nice to meet you Ms. MacLean. As you know, Major Maur would like a status report." He held up his broken arm. "Guess why I got the job?"

Mac winced. "That must have hurt," she said with sympathy. "Please, just call me Mac. A status report?" She blinked. "We're wiping the place clean of anything that might be useful. Someone was here before us, sir, and already took a lot of supplies."

"It's nice to meet you Mac," Cardelli said, finding himself pleasantly infected by her smile. *Yet another one with a positive attitude even when the chips were on the table,* Cardelli thought. *We humans may just have a chance.*

Mac flipped through the pages of the clipboard, then stopped and showed the Lieutenant a list, saying, "I think this is pretty much it. Hope you can read my chicken scratching..."

VIPERS

Mark VII:

22 engines

22 modules and components (ECM, communications, avionics)

4 on-board computers

37 assorted re-build kits

Mark II:

3 engines

5 modules and components (ECM, communications, avionics)

0 on-board computers

0 re-build kits

RAPTORS

24 complete FTL drives (also used in the Rhinos)

14 engines

12 modules and components (ECM, communications, avionics)

18 on-board computers (also used in the Rhinos)

20 assorted re-build kits

RHINOS

6 engines

2 modules and components (ECM, communications, avionics)

13 assorted re-build kits

Assorted parts: fasteners, screws, bolts, cotter pins, cable, relays, circuits, other hardware and electronic components.

Assorted structural components: panels, braces, stiffeners, conduit, sheet metal.

Pallet of assorted Raptor avionics

"I think this list is pretty complete, but of course I don't have the total numbers yet," she went on. "The deck chiefs from the *Perseus* and the *Griffyn* have also gotten some supplies; we'll coordinate later to get a complete inventory."

He mused over the list. "You don't think this is a lot...?" he asked, his voice trailing off as he continued to study her sheet.

"Sir?" Mac ventured. She yawned and tried to stifle it. "Sorry, sir. Not a lot?" Slowly she shook her head. "I don't know that we'll ever be back her, sir, or to the Colonies, either. We're going to need everything we can get."

"Well I was just thinking..." Cardelli said slowly. He noticed the reaction on Mac's face and grinned. "Don't worry, that isn't a dangerous thing most of the time." He chuckled softly.

"I've had some experience with Raptor FTL engines. I knew a fellow who was stationed at that military base on Cassiopeia for awhile and he couldn't say much but he hinted that they were experimenting with advanced FTL technology there... something that had the potential to really revolutionize space travel."

He watched her expression and didn't blame her for being a bit confused.

"What got me thinking was my experience during the attack," Patrick continued. "I got to see a Raider up close and it FTL hopped away... something that gives the cylons a huge advantage in combat."

He saw her raise an eyebrow and knew that he had piqued her interest.

"This guy from the base and I got d... well, let's just say we were talking over beers one night and discussing whether or not it was possible to ever put FTL capability on the Mark VIIs. We never seriously discussed it again because the military budget has been cut for some time now but it's always been an idea in the back of my head." He paused, remembering. "Now that I've seen the cylons use that technique, I'm wondering if we could possibly use some of these Raptor FTL drives to outfit a squadron of Vipers. Given that the *Libra* has advanced manufacturing capabilities, do you think this

would be possible?"

Frak me! Mac stared at Cardelli, her thoughts going at FTL speed. "No," she said, "there's no room in a Viper to fit an FTL drive..." she blinked, thinking. To herself she murmured, "Well... nothing is impossible... it would take a lot of modifications... frak, no, it's too crazy! But still..."

She stood, unmoving and silent for a long moment, her gaze unfocused. Finally she looked directly back at him. "Gods, wouldn't it be great if we could do that?!" She grinned. "Well, they said a home-built rally car could never win the Aerelon 3K race, but my brothers and I did!" She chuckled and added, "Maybe you should get d... ah, talk over beers and have more of these not-very-dangerous thoughts more often!"

Agro Cargo Vessel *Demeter* **Day 01 0900 Hours**

Hunt had pulled the blankets off and took the pillow and made himself a nest under the steel counter bolted to the wall in the corner. Feeling more protected, he'd finally fallen asleep.

It had been several hours since breakfast, and Ferdie Bello went to check on Hunt. She figured he was probably sleeping, but still, infections were sometimes tricky and his was a bad one.

She opened the hatch to the infirmary only to find the bed empty. She was about to turn back to ask Clive for help searching, when she noticed the pillow and blankets were missing from the small bed. She found that odd.

She walked in and looked around. And then she saw him, huddled under the counter in a nest of blankets. Her heart broke. What kind of childhood had he had, that he would rather sleep on the floor than in a bed? She knelt by his side and called out softly, "Hunt?"

Hunt jumped awake, heart pounding, scrambling back against the wall. "Oh... oh..." *Frak, she scared me... I musta been really sleeping.* "Oh, uh, hi Ms. Ferdie."

"Hello, Hunt. Are you alright?" Concern was apparent in her voice.

He flexed his hand, then crawled out from under the counter, standing. He showed her the bandaged hand. "It feels a lot better now," he assured her.

"I'll be the judge of that, young man." She motioned for him to sit on the bed and un-bandaged his hand. The angry red of infection had

subsided, and the skin around the wound was a healthy pink. "Good," she murmured. "Are you hungry? I'm sure Gia can whip up a sandwich or something if you are." She wanted to ask him why, why had he chosen to sleep on the floor, but he was like a wild bird, and it would take some time for him to trust her enough to tell her.

He perked up. "A sandwich? Oh, uh," *Okay, don't seem too eager.* "Yeah. That would be great."

"Excellent. Let me tidy up a bit and then we'll go." She turned to pick the blankets and pillows lying under the counter.

"Oh... uh, sorry," Hunt said. *Geez, I must have looked like an idiot.* He bent to help her. "I, um... is there any other place I could sleep? That's safer?" *Oh that was stupid, now she'll think I don't feel safe. Well... I didn't. Don't. Oh, hell.* He rubbed his face with his uninjured hand. "I just feel too..." he groped for words. "Exposed. On the bed in here."

"Oh." Exposed? She had a sudden image of a young boy, sleeping on the streets, trying to protect himself as well he could. "You could use the little room we moved you to when they brought the injured lieutenant. It is small, but it is cozy. And you can lock the hatch if it'll make you feel safer."

He nodded slowly, remembering the room he'd been in before, but not recalling being moved there. *Shit, I must really have been sick.* He looked at his hand again, opening and closing it gingerly. It looked much better than it had just a few hours before. "That little room would be good," he finally said. "You, er, said something about food?"

She chuckled and tousled his hair without thinking. "Yes, I did. Let's get to the galley and put my little sister to work."

Hunt ducked his head, feeling odd when she touched him. *Frak, she's so nice... she makes me feel like... Like what? Like a real person. I remember... someone... from when I was really little... who was nice.* He sighed, letting her re-bandage his hand. *I wonder if she'll still like me when she finds out about me?*

"Ms Gia is your sister?" he asked. *Wow, go figure!*

"Oh yes, she is!" They started walking down the passageway, heading for the galley. "She's also married to Terence, the man who helped you to the infirmary after breakfast. *Demeter* is, well, like a big family. Some of us are even related to each other!"

Gia was still in the galley when they got there, pattering about. She

happily prepared the biggest sandwiches Hunt had ever seen. Ferdie was sure that, after his huge breakfast, he wouldn't be able to eat more than half of one; before she knew it, he'd finished up two, and was busy tackling a piece of pie with a huge glass of milk.

Mercurius
1520 Hours

Kalrk had been surprised that he had been allowed to board his ship and to launch from *Libra*. And yet here he was, doing guard duty near *Griffyn*.

And she was here.

"So." He was highly nervous, having spent a number of hours with Psyche D'Argent. "What do you like to do for fun?"

She was back to not looking at him as a way to try to put an end to all the weird emotions he seemed to invoke in her. Earlier, while waiting for him outside his meeting with the commander, it hit her like a ton of bricks that in the very short time she knew him, she had experienced more physical contact than in her whole life, and had been able to wear an enviro suit with out taking copious amounts of Valium.

She was going to have to put an end to whatever it was he was doing to her, so she was fighting a battle as she answered him "Not much: reading mostly." She considered the question for a moment, trying to move her thoughts away from *him*.

"I used to go to the archery range on the estate but I've not shot a bow in years. I'm actually a very boring person, not much to me really," she finished

He glanced at her. She was looking straight ahead, so he was looking at her profile. "You're not boring, Psy. I find you.. intriguing. You're unlike any hu... unlike any person, I've ever met."

She could not help it; she burst out laughing almost manically. If only he knew. And just like that he had yet again broken through the wall she had been trying to build up in defense of him.

She turned and looked at him "Yeah, I guess you could say they broke the mold when I was made."

Now he had a laugh. "You could say that I broke the mold when I was made."

She stared at him intently, soaking in the sight of him "Yes, I could not imagine another like you." She continued, to herself, *thank goodness, because I don't think I could survive more than one of him.*

"That's a fair bet, Psy.

He looked at her, studying her, memorizing every detail of her.

Ragnar Anchorage

"Maybe you should get d... ah, talk over beers and have more of these not-very-dangerous thoughts more often!" Mac exclaimed.

Patrick smiled at her. "Look at your list again... carefully," he suggested. "When people design stuff, most of them use ideas already well established. Most will try to build X, Y, and Z based primarily on concepts that have worked well in the past. They don't even consider the possibility that maybe you can modify X and then don't really need Y anymore." He knew that sounded truly confusing but he said it anyway.

"That's where we are better than the frakking cylons. They're machines and have certainly proved that they can use their artificial intelligence to improve upon and miniaturize our designs... but they can't think creatively the way we do. That's where we've still got them beat."

He could tell by her expression that - although enthused - Mac was still puzzled.

"Think about it this way," he suggested. "What is the most complicated piece of hardware on a Viper? It's the computer... right - particularly navigation and FTL calculations?" He pointed at her clipboard for emphasis. "Every capital ship in this fleet already has a sophisticated FTL computer on board, so why do we need one on the Vipers?"

He watched her eyes light up as she began to understand what he was thinking.

"With all of your technical expertise, shouldn't we be able to install the FTL drives along with some sort of dedicated receiver in a reasonable-sized avionics package behind the missile launchers on bottom of the Vipers? So what if the Vipers themselves can't do the actual FTL calculations? At least this way the *Libra* could transmit encrypted coordinates to a squadron already in flight that is protecting a retreating fleet. After our main ships are away the Vipers could then jump to the same destination and land normally

without the increased risk of combat landings. I heard a lot of people die yesterday on the military communications network and much of it happened when pilots low on fuel and ammo were trying to land while still under fire."

He paused for a moment and studied her expression carefully.

"The other advantage this would give us is that we would then have the ability to do what the cylons did to us... if we know where their ships are we can launch a squadron in advance and FTL hop it right on top of them before they can react!"

Now Mac was smiling.

"We could at least take one of these FTL drives and try it on a test ship, couldn't we?" He watched her for a reaction. "If you still think the Mark VIIIs have too much stuff aboard we could try it with the Mark IIs... they're not nearly as sophisticated, although the avionics would have to be shielded if it's behind the missile launchers. We wouldn't want to be stupid enough to build a fighter that can't shoot."

**PO2 Alexandra MacLean, back on the *Libra*
Day 01 1647 Hours**

Mac sat at Chief Sutton's desk and stared blankly at the scribbled lists in front of her. She was too tired even to yawn. Finally, she stirred and typed the list into the computer, saving it and printing out several copies. Okay... next... Frak, Vipers with FTL? She stared into space again a moment. I need to go take a look at a Mark VII and see... She sat without moving, her thoughts going in circles. We'd need to reconfigure... "Sleep," she told herself, realizing that she was too tired to do anything else productive.

Just then two of the night shift knuckledraggers came into the office; Specialist Evaristo Miller and Specialist Will Radoslav.

"Hey, guys," Mac said. "You're early for your shift..." She recognized something in their attitude, but was too tired to try and figure it out. "Sit down, what can I do for you?"

They didn't sit, just stood there. "We heard the Chief was dead," Miller said.

Mac sighed and nodded, her eyes resting on the dog tags for a moment. "Yes," she said soberly.

"And you're in charge now," Radoslav said belligerently.

Gods, I don't need this right now, Mac thought. "Commander Rodrigues asked me to take over," she said steadily.

"VanEuler has been a PO2 longer than you," Radoslav said with resentment. "He should take over the deck chief duties."

Mac rested her elbows on the desk and pressed her palms against her eyes for a moment, then looked at the two knuckledraggers again. "Did VanEuler put you two up to this?" she asked without inflection.

By the glances they exchanged, Mac could tell that at the very least VanEuler was in on it, but Miller and Radoslav said together, "No."

And I have a line number for PO First, but VanEuler doesn't... Mac thought, but she didn't voice it. She thought of the small box, there on the desk, with Chief Petty Officer insignia inside. How official is that anyway? she wondered. Flatly, she said, "The Commander gave me a job to do," she stood up. "If you don't agree with his orders, then I suggest that you—and PO2 VanEuler—take it up with him."

She looked from one to the other. It was obvious that they hadn't expected her to stand up to them. "If that's all, gentlemen, I suggest you report to duty," she said.

She stood there behind the desk and just looked at them. They shifted nervously and looked at each other. Miller shrugged, and they both left.

Slowly Mac sat again. "Oh, frak," she said softly, because she knew she'd have more trouble from them.

Liza Liala, CBI
Aboard Grandeur
0730 Hours

She led her new (and annoyingly enough very temporary) charges, and her new (even more annoyingly not so temporary) bodyguard through the corridors of the Grandeur as quietly as she could manage. She keyed herself into the room she was sharing with Willborn, announced herself and ushered them all inside (and therefore out of sight) as quickly as possible.

"What is this?" Wilborn asked.

"Marines off the *Libra*. Commander Rodrigues has loaned them to me to support our investigation." Without even thinking she had called it such - "Our investigation" - as if he had been CBI, as well.

"Unfortunately, we only have them for the day, so we'd better get on it," Liza continued. "Did anything of consequence occur while I was away?"

"No. In fact Chief Dirac reports that of our initial twelve suspects - counting those we've cleared - none has done anything remotely odd or suspicious while you were away. Mister Reynard, for instance, hasn't even left his quarters." Wilborn sighed, then went on. "I've been reviewing all the tapes, and I have yet to see anyone, on any of them, doing anything suspicious, either."

"And the critical areas around the ship?"

Willborn shifted slightly. "We didn't have enough personnel to cover all of them."

She had expected that. Still, it would have been nice. It just wasn't possible, so she said, "Alright. If we can't cover those areas with personnel, I want them covered with cameras. I want all the crew hatches covered with cameras too, if possible. I'll consult with Captain Keramidas on getting that set up. If he doesn't have any spares aboard, I'll see if we can rearrange some of the ones in less critical areas, or attempt to find some spares elsewhere in the fleet. In the meantime let's contact Chief Dirac, and have him meet us. And order some breakfast and coffee, as well. We only have the Marines for one day, so we'd best make the most of them while time permits."

Colonel Brennan Herald
Destroyer Douglas J. Griffyn CIC
Day 01 1705 Hours

"DRADIS contact," Braddock called out. After a moment's pause, he added, "two cylon Raiders, sir!" The blips were moving towards Ragnar at a leisurely pace.

"Figures we wouldn't be able to stay here too long," Herald said, and then picked up the handset. "Action stations, action stations, set condition one, prepare to launch the alert fighters," he said with vigor. "Bring flak turrets and missile barrages to standby, there might be more Toasters. Let them get closer and be ready to fire once they get in range." He hit a switch, activating the circuit to the flight deck. "Launch the Alert Vipers. I want these Raiders dead before they have a chance to make a peep to their friends."

Launching the Vipers was slower than usual, but they were in the air in under a minute. Seven Vipers rose from the outer atmosphere of

Ragnar to engage the two Raiders.

"*Mercurius*, are you seeing this," Herald asked on frequency 8386.

Meanwhile, aboard *Mercurius*

"DRADIS contact!" Kalrk shouted. "Tighten your seat strap, we're going..." but he remembered what Rodrigues had said to him. He turned on his wireless. "*Mercurius* to *Griffyn*, requesting permission to engage the enemy."

Psy smirked at him "'impressed with your initiative'? hmm..."

"Something like that," Kalrk replied.

"So just how good are you at flying? Cause I don't feel like dying at the moment if that could be avoided, please." she asked.

He wondered if she was going to have another panic attack, and if so, what he could do about that, while fighting raiders.

"I'm good, Psy. Here's a secret: I'm the best pilot you ever met."

She laughed "It's OK; I'm not about to freak out on you, I promise, As for the best pilot I ever met... right now, I really hope so." With that she tightened her strap.

[*Mercurius*, are you seeing this?] It was Herald's voice from on the destroyer *Douglas J. Griffyn*, coming across the wireless.

"Yes, I see them, dammit! Permission to engage!"

***Griffyn* CIC**

" Copy that Kalrk, permission granted to engage Raiders, good hunting," Herald replied

That only took over a minute, Kalrk cursed silently. Repeating Herald's order, Kalrk replied, "Copy that, *Griffyn*. *Mercurius* is cleared to engage."

He pushed the button on the flight stick and the turbos roared to life, propelling the small ship like a rocket. On his DRADIS were the two Raider blips and the larger blip that was *Griffyn*, and seven small Viper blips.

He launched two missiles from the nose of *Mercurius*, and though one

raider eluded them the other raider was not so lucky. A missile had locked onto its exhaust heat signature and impacted into the back of the enemy ship, destroying it.

Captain Alicia "Mad Dog" Barker
Leading *Griffyn's* Vipers

"Weapons free, and engage. Don't let this Toaster get away," she transmitted to her squadron as they met the Raider that had not been claimed by *Mercurius*.

The Raider was VERY good, the way it dodged and spun through the swarm of Vipers truly impressed Barker. Abruptly, though, it dodged another Viper's fire only to be met by ordinance from Barker's. The explosion was close range and sent debris hurtling everywhere.

"BLOOD... how in the frak do these Toasters have blood?" she asked herself, just as she had asked herself dozens of times in the battle when the *Solstice* was destroyed.

"Okay *Griffyn*, Raiders are down, we'll stay out here and establish a perimeter and be ready for anything sir," Barker said.

As soon as word was received of the downed Raiders, a Herald sent a Raptor from the *Griffyn* to give the word to *Libra*. It was time to leave. The cylons would send more scouts when the first two became overdue.

Battlestar *Libra* CIC
Day 01 1730 Hours

The comms officer announced the call from *Libra's* flight deck.
"Raptor pilot from *Griffyn*, sir."

Rodrigues picked up the handset, listening briefly. "Roger that," he said, then hung up the handset.

"Begin jump prep, and get us away from the Anchorage," he announced. and then switched to frequency 8386: "Attention all Civilian vessels, we will be jumping to the Cassiopeia Moon, begin jump preparations, and follow *Libra* out of the storm."

They had known cylons would come sooner or later, but still the adrenaline began flowing again. Slowly the *Libra* and its fleet of ships moved back up through the storm to meet up with *Mercurius* and *Griffyn*. Once they were clear of the gas giant the fleet jumped away and into the distant stars beyond.